'THE NOVEL OF DOCTRINE'

A STUDY IN ASPECTS OF LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH RADICALISM

by

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TO

KANIYAI AND 'MIYA

and

BINU, BIBBO, ANU.

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SUMMARY

The present work attempts a sociological study of some late eighteenth-century English novels, most of which have been grouped together by critics and all can be included in the school that E.A. Baker calls 'the novel of doctrine'. Without going into the merits of this classification, I have tried here to analyse and understand the kind of social consciousness that has gone into the making of these novels.

The novels discussed here roughly cover the period from the late seventeen-sixties to the beginning of the next century. The period is one of tremendous importance in human history. Apart from what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic or the British Channel, in Britain itself epoch-making changes were taking place. As occasionally pointed out in the course of the thesis, none of these developments can be viewed in isolation. In their aims and objectives, in their total direction they had much in common. Yet, in the present work, the novels have been viewed by and large as products of the specific conditions of British social-political life during the period. In fact the local historical context has sometimes been emphasized at the cost of the influences from abroad. The doctrinal or radical novel in late eighteenth-century England is said to be more or less exclusively the result of French influence. The present study may help to set the balance right.

The study also points out that these novels (and their authors) trace the direction of the change that took place in England over the last thirty years of the century and, therefore, instead of upholding

a universally agreed set of values, they exemplify significantly different frames of outlook. Beginning with a fumbling faith in the future based on the prospects now opening up, to a cynical and romantic distrust and rejection of the kind of progress that was taking place, we find towards the end of the century an awareness of the evils of industrialization. Simultaneously with this we begin to notice an acrimonious and militant tone of rebellion - rebellion not only against a closed oligarchy and chartered companies but also against the nascent system of social organization based in individual 'merit' leading to acquired (and not inherited) property. While in the earlier works we find a concern for the manners and morals of the poor, in the later we begin to see a growing concern for their material well-being - aforetaste of that Victorian realism which relied so heavily on the Parliamentary blue-books.

The plan of the work is self-explanatory. The first of the two parts attempts a general survey of the social-historical background and then of 'the novel of doctrine' as a whole. The second part takes up for detailed study The Fool of Quality by Henry Brooke, the novels of Robert Bage, and Nature and Art by Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald. The Fool of Quality came out towards the end of the seventeen-sixties, and while it anticipates Adam Smith it also shows a deep-rooted attachment to the past, to a system based on Protection and trade-regulations and navigation acts. Robert Bage's first novel was published just after the American War of Independence, and the last in 1796. He shows greater interest than Brooke in real production as against trade and commerce, for which he advocates complete freedom. By the end he has almost completely despaired of

'progress'. Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art came out in the same year as Bage's last novel, Hermsprong, and shows, like the latter, symptoms of that despair which was so common in the last years of the century. But alongside this withdrawal born of defeat the novel shows the shift in emphasis that had by now taken place in the attitude towards the poor.

Wherever there is an ascendant class, a large portion of the morality of the country emanates from its class interests, and its feelings of class superiority.

John Stuart Mill, Liberty, Ch.i.

The scum is as mean as the dregs, and as to your nobility, about 200 men of quality, what are they to the body of the nation? Why, Sir, they are subalterns.... They receive more from the public than they pay to it.

Alderman William Beckford (father of the novelist and M.P. for the City of London) speaking in the Commons in 1761.

...Your public virtue is gone, or resident in an inconsiderable part of the middle rank; the head and tail of the fish stink horribly.

Mr. Melton in Robert Bage's Mount Henneth (1781-2?)

Bentham is a purely English phenomenon.... With the dryest naivete he takes the modern shopkeeper, especially the English shopkeeper, as the normal man. Whatever is useful to this queer normal man, and to his world, is absolutely useful. This yard-measure, then, he applies to past, present, and future.... Had I the courage of my friend, Heinrich Heine, I should call Mr. Jeremy a genius in the way of bourgeois stupidity.

Marx, Capital, 1918, p.622n.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The present study is an exercise in understanding and interpretation. Some late eighteenth century novels and novelists form the subject of this exercise. Through them, and independently, an attempt is also made to arrive at some definition, albeit partial, of the nature and growth of radical consciousness in the last thirty years or so of the century.

The novels and novelists discussed here make a school. So at least the history books say. For the purposes of this thesis, at least as a starting point, I have accepted this grouping as valid. In the course of my discussion of the novels, however, I have tried to take note of some individual disaffinities between one novelist and another, and of some points of similarity they may have with those who do not belong here.

These novels and novelists have been placed by E.A. Baker in a category he calls the Novel of Doctrine. I have accepted this nomenclature - though only as a descriptive label. The group has been variously designated as philosophical, radical, propagandist, revolutionary, jacobin, etc. There is no special reason for my choice of one name rather than another. Nor have I questioned, except casually sometimes, whether any one of these suggestive terms is applicable to all or most or any of those who have been traditionally honoured (or dishonoured) with such epithets.

Equally have I refrained from the theoretical, rather abstract, discussion of the whole question of art and propaganda, art and society, art and ideas, etc.

What I have done is to take a few novels (and novelists) from this group and to attempt a close analysis of the kind of social consciousness which has gone into their making and to try to get to grips with the radical (so-called or real) temper of the period. The study is descriptive and analytical rather than evaluative, and historical rather than literary.

I hope, however, that I have not altogether disregarded literary criteria. The very method of concentrating on a few selected works precludes (depending, of course, on the limitations of the critic) the complete abdication of critical responsibility. These works have been mostly studied in the lump, with a short or long, exact or misleading, summary of individual novels, followed by a few critical comments, acute or insipid, in either case as likely as not to be completely irrelevant. At worst, a random sample of remarks with a radical import has comprised the whole of critical endeavour. It is time the novels were treated with love and care.

Any such approach had necessarily to be selective, but I believe that my choice represents a fair cross-section of the school and gives a fairly accurate idea of the changing pattern of beliefs in the period, and, though what is a loss in comprehensiveness, may not be a gain in depth, an attempt in this direction was worth making.

The novels and novelists I have selected are not only fairly representative and significant but also some of the best of the group. It cannot be said about them that they incorporated ideas in their works and talked of topical events of political and social importance only because these had market value. Yet there is this difficulty in approaching them, especially as literature, that only by a long stretch of imagination can they be called novels of doctrine, even in the pejorative sense. One serious exception that can be taken to the term that Baker uses for denominating this school (as also to some of the terms used by other critics and literary historians) is that for all their preoccupation with doctrine (or politics, or propaganda), these novels are frequently no more than variations on the old threadbare material of the circulating library novel. Their interest in ideas and their concern with social problems, for all one knows and sometimes despite what one knows, may well be genuine, though there again they are cliché-ridden. Where they absolutely fail the test of literary judgment and even make one sometimes doubt the extent and sincerity of their commitment, is in that the central exposition of the plot and the outspoken ideas on the periphery, in irrelevant discussions and even more irrelevant side episodes, reveal in most cases and sometimes in their best achievements too, a tortuous mating of incompatibles, so to speak. Even a plain, simple, blatantly didactic moral tale of Maria Edgeworth's, from its very singleness of purpose, from the confident awareness of what it is all about, is weightier than some of the

far more pretentious (and portentous) novels of some of the radicals.[1] They are often enough working in the same direction as Miss Edgeworth, and towards the same objective - the formulation of an idealistic bourgeois norm of conduct. But the old fashioned machinery of the novel almost always gets the better of their ideological concerns. Or, which is perhaps the same thing, the ideological intention and the fictional material have nothing in common. Of this defect, perhaps by far the best epitome is provided by S.J. Pratt in his Liberal Opinions, where the connexion between the 'opinions' of the author and the adventures of Benignus, the hero, is well-nigh impossible to establish.

One way, therefore, these novels could be approached was to sort out the 'ideas', the stray remarks of important or unimportant, sympathetic or unsympathetic, characters, or of the novelist in his authorial capacity (and the characters, of every variety, serve at one time or another as docile spokesmen for the author), and to build up from them a coherent statement on the author's ideological position.[2] The other was to leave out the remarks, unless they were in consonance with and endorsed by what can be deduced from plot, character, situation, anecdote, and to try to find out what was central in the novel, to view the novel as a whole (to the

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1. It is a different matter that the self-righteous, individualist morality of a Maria Edgeworth (or a Samuel Smiles) is likely to be less satisfying to a modern reader than the fumbling, confused, tentative, not-so-sure attitudes of, say, Robert Bage, who nevertheless has a close affinity with her.

2. Or, the remarks would be arranged under separate headings, such as, primitivism, anti-slavery movement, feminism, and so on, to give a more or less accurate idea of the essential tenets of the school as a whole. But this is a matter of arrangement and not one of an essential difference in method.

extent that it was possible to do so), to emphasize what was new and significant in the fictional material of the novel itself. It is possible I think to ignore the conventional machinery (though even the conformity to current conventions gives some insight into the psychology of the author), and yet to arrive at some intelligible estimate of the author's world outlook.

I have by and large followed the second method and, though I am aware of the difficulties of such an approach and of its limitations in the present case, I have found it rewarding. Even these novels, I realized, can be reduced to some essentials which tell us more about the authors than do their most pungent remarks of social criticism - which may sometimes have been actuated, if not by the desire to make a mark, then by some passing though genuine mood of disappointment and annoyance. An appreciation based on the treatment of a novel (even a minor one) as an organism, as I have found particularly in the case of Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality and Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art, is far more satisfying than if we concentrated on the radical observations in the work, or if we treated these observations merely as a conformist indulgence of a current ideological fad. From being placed in the context of the novel as a whole, even the stray remarks gain in value and the fads acquire, with different individuals, meaningful and distinctive implications. From detailed analysis, even Robert Bage, despite all the chaos of ill-organized material and his apparent insouciance, emerged as a solid middle class radical: the woolliness then appeared to be a symptom of his anxiety to set up a norm for his class as well as a symptom of his nonconformity

with some of its values.

On another point of method, a few words may be necessary. If sometimes I tend to stray far afield into the details of political and economic history, and the history of ideas, I do so not from a disregard of literary values, but partly because I wanted to arrive at some personal understanding of the total late eighteenth-century scene, and partly because I believe (the question of my competence for this kind of approach apart) that any human activity, even the literary and the artistic, can be best understood only when viewed in the social-historical context. For a school of novels like ours, such an approach becomes almost obligatory. I say almost because it is quite possible to ignore the historical context and arrive at some such formulation as, say, that Robert Bage and Holcroft were revolutionary novelists. I can well understand some arch-conservative dubbing them as jacobins and revolutionaries. And perhaps, in the abstract, a favourable critic, on the basis of a few remarks here and there, may try to place them on a pedestal that does not belong to them. But a dispassionate study of their novels and perhaps even a casual understanding of the social history of the period would make it plain, as we shall have occasion to see on certain points, that they were, even from the standard of their own day, anything but revolutionary, that they were, in the main, upholding ideals that had come to stay, that neither preached or believed in the violent overthrow of state authority.

Bage, in particular, is, for the most part, a disgruntled

representative of the industrial bourgeoisie. He had a stake in the country and was yet a failure in business. He had been left behind in the race of money-making, and, perhaps for that reason, shows, at least on a few counts, a reaction away from some middle class values and standards. Yet like most middle class radicals of the period, he would like to keep in check the poor rabble, Burke's 'swinish multitude', Smollett's 'many-headed hydra'. Perhaps to characterize him as a revolutionary shows no more than a confusion of terms. But even to get our terms right, we must at least make an effort to understand the nature of historical development during the period.

Where I think a corrective is most needed is in that these novelists have been generally credited with a concern for general principles and all mankind, or with a tame conformity to fashionable cults. Their more immediate preoccupation (not necessarily conscious) with the formulation and/or dissemination of a middle class ideology and ethics has often gone by default, and it has not been realized that a certain measure of vague idealism and the tendency of an idea to become a more or less meaningless craze are but natural in what was the formative period of the psychology of the industrial capitalist. Radicalism in this period is closely bound up with the growth of middle class consciousness and our novelists are on the whole (though not always as unequivocally as it may seem) working towards it. Most of them reveal a mediocre, muddled mind, and a mediocre mind may sometimes be more transparently revealing than a sophisticated one, of attitudes and

values as they are accepted by and become part of the popular psychology. Yet a concern with human situations has its own implications and at times, particularly towards the end of the century, these novelists manifest elements of latter day anti-utilitarianism. Far from their having a ready-made, cut and dried, fully fledged ideology, except perhaps in their not so universal and unequivocal opposition to rank and authority, they are in general uncertain of their ground in a fast-changing world - which may partly account for their failure as artists. An attempt is made in the present thesis to follow them through some of their confusions and uncertainties.

An exhaustive study of the nature of English radicalism, or of middle class consciousness during this period, from the point of view of social-political history, is of course beyond the scope of the present work. In the chapter on the background I have indeed attempted a general summary. Naturally, however, this summary is not only not comprehensive, but has a slant and emphasis which I thought would be relevant and helpful to my main purpose, the understanding and interpretation of the novels. Here a sequential, straight-forward narrative of 'landmarks' in the intellectual and social history of the last thirty years of the eighteenth century (possibly uncluttered by references to novels, except an occasional one) may have been more desirable. But, though I have mentioned dates, I have not always kept to a strict (and narrow) chronology. Moreover, I have tried, as far as possible, to let the background grow out of my immediate concern -

novels and novelists, those that I am directly concerned with and others that I am not. Here I have also relied upon extensive quotation from or summary of passages from other contemporary sources, so as to let the picture emerge out of them, rather than to reproduce the historian's account of developments during the period. My choice of evidence is of course selective and to fill up the gaps the historian has to step in, though I have tried to keep his meddling presence to a minimum.

In the second chapter, I have attempted a general survey of the school as a whole, though, here again, I have concentrated on a few authors and their works instead of ranging over (and getting lost in) a large number of novels.

In later chapters, in my analysis of particular novels, I have gone into greater detail, trying to deduce the author's ideology from a whole complex of novelistic material. For this kind of approach I found Robert Bage the most elusive of our group. I was, therefore, obliged to adopt a somewhat, and I hope not a completely, different method for discussing his works.

In these later chapters, in order to explain some point, locally and in context, I have had to make an occasional incursion (rather digressive) into as much of social-political history, etc., as I have been able to understand. My discussion of the novels therefore has become regrettably long and sometimes tediously detailed.

What troubles me more is that because I had to concentrate on what I thought significant and valuable in particular novels, the

scope of the thesis has become inevitably and annoyingly limited. More than a casual discussion of subjects like enlightenment and education, the universal faith in the omnipotence of reason (its limitations and the qualifications that went with it), individualism and the different forms it took in different authors, primitivism and related ideas, feminism and the anti-salvery movement, were by definition demanded in a study of the doctrinal novel of the period. Many other topics I am afraid have either not been discussed at all or have only been touched upon. Even vegetarianism and the prescription of a temperate regime were in a more than trivial sense radical principles and deserved some attention. These omissions I cannot but regret. I wish I had either adopted some other, maybe better, method or discussed more novels. But in the first case perhaps the novels could not have been treated as novels and in the second either my study of them would have been sketchy or the dissertation unmanageable.

An apology is needed also for my use of certain words (and their derivatives), such as, 'bourgeois' and 'romantic'. Both are difficult words to handle, but it was virtually impossible, in the present study, to do without them. I have, however, tried to use them sparingly and only when the context is not likely to occasion any ambiguity. Britain and England, again, have been used throughout as interchangeable.

I hope, however, that despite all shortcomings and omissions (and even where I have been fastidiously detailed, my discussion of subjects may be far from satisfactory) the present study gives some new and necessary insight into the novels and into aspects

of radicalism during the period. I have perhaps dredged up a lot of sludge, but I hope also a few pearls - some flawed conjectures, some imperfect hypotheses, some inspired errors, which may not be entirely worthless.

P A R T O N E

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

I

It may be possible to argue that every novel is in a significant sense a novel of doctrine. With even greater plausibility can it be said of the great novels of the mid-eighteenth century that they were conceived in and permeated by the intellectual temper of the previous century. If the modern English novel was begotten in the pages of the Spectator and Tatler and the proceedings of the Royal Society, it was equally the product of modern philosophy from Descartes and Hobbes to Locke and Berkeley and was deeply influenced by the sermons of Low Church divines like Isaac Barrow, John Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, Benjamin Hoadly. The works of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne may also, on somewhat different planes of meaning, be read as radical manifestoes. But I am concerned here with that fairly well-defined school of doctrinal novels which flourished in the later eighteenth century, a distinctive feature of which is said to be the influence of 'French' ideas, those of Rousseau in particular. Rousseau's impact, if it is not exactly the universal trade-mark, at least helps us define the beginnings of the school in Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality (1766-70).

But it is not a question of influences, nor of ideas alone. The novels we are concerned with have their faults, but even at the

worst they are more than a mere jumble of notions picked up from here, there and everywhere. They reflect, in one way or another, some aspect of the life around them. Every now and then, they voice their authors' discontent with things as they are. Such discontent, in itself, is no more than one of the forms in which men's consciousness comprehends social tensions and the need for reform. Its correlate in real life differs in each country and each period and, far from being the symptom of a cosmic malaise, our novelists' discontent is grounded in the actual conditions of their society.

What were, then, the specific conditions of life in late eighteenth-century England which led to the awareness of a gap between things as they are and as they ought to be? What was the basis in reality for the fairly widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo? What was the kind of improvement desired? Who were the people who called for change, and what were their party and class bearings? What were the motive springs and the ideological bases of their demands? Were the demands identical over the whole length of, say, thirty years?

These are some of the questions we shall try to answer in the present chapter. After examining some significant expressions of discontent, we shall go on to study in some detail the conditions in which our school of novelists flourished. We shall largely confine ourselves here to a discussion of the historical-political development in the eighteenth century, particularly in the last thirty years or so.

conglomerate of attributes. Thomas Love Peacock, for example, wryly speaks of 'game-bagging, poacher-shooting, trespasser-hounding, footpath-stopping, common-enclosing, rack-renting, and all the other liberal pursuits and pastimes which make a country gentleman an ornament to the world and a blessing to the poor.'[1] Sir Ambrose at any rate, in his renunciation of folly and practice of economy, in his resolution to become a Man, is formed in the image of the middle class entrepreneur.

But, only a few years before the publication of Barham Downs, when faced with the American crisis, country gentlemen had played a positive role in English politics. Though they had seldom functioned as a group and were mostly ineffective, some individuals among them had probably always maintained a certain independence of the 'Court' party - the upper class leaders who according to convenience adopted the Whig or Tory denomination. And as the war with America dragged on towards defeat and became more and more expensive, even those country gentlemen who had earlier wanted the Americans to shoulder part of the burden of taxation arising out of the Seven Years' War and were opposed to the policy of appeasing rebellion, began to see light. Country gentlemen in Parliament were the decisive factor behind the fall of the North administration.[2] Before that, in April, 1780, a majority of them had voted in favour of the famous motion of John Dunning (an eminent lawyer, a protégé of Shelburne and later the first Baron Ashburton) which said that

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1. Crotchet Castle (1831), Ch.1, The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock, (ed. by) David Garnett, 1963, II, p.651.
2. It should be remembered, though, that when William Pitt came to power they rallied round the administration.

'the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.'[1] Outside Parliament, they formed the backbone of the Association movement in 1779-80, which, if it was a carry over from the Wilkite movement of the previous decade, was also the outcome of the American conflict.[2]

The most advanced radical platform of the period was the Jebb-Cartwright connexion in the metropolis. Wyvill and his Yorkshire Association never went as far as the Society for Constitutional Information. It is true that the Rockingham Whigs were out to use the Association movement for, and tried to restrain it from going beyond, their limited objective of economical reform. But Wyvill and his associates were not only tactically propitiating an influential faction at Court, they were more than half disposed to backsliding. 'The difference between Wyvill and Burke', says Ian Christie, 'was one of 'more' or 'less' ... and Wyvill, far from being a pioneer of a 'democratic revolution' might more plausibly be represented as a doctrinaire Whig reactionary.'[3] Other counties

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1. According to Sir George Savile this resolution of Dunning's succeeded (while others failed) because it was "declaratory and theoretic", and "in general people like well-sounding constitutional maxims" while they fall short in action. "It is pleasanter to read fighting speeches than to fight." See G.S. Veitch, The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform, 1913, p.68.

2. An interesting evidence of the role of the American War in politicalizing the people is provided by William Cobbett. Before the war, his father 'neither knew nor thought anything' about politics. 'After, however, the American war had continued for some time, and the cause and nature of it began to be understood, or rather misunderstood, by the lower classes of people in England, we became a little better acquainted'with political subjects. 'My father was a partizan of the Americans'. Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine (1796), etc., Nonesuch Press, 1927, pp.21-2.

3. Ian R. Christie, Introduction to G.S. Veitch, The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform (1913), 1965, p.ix.

showed less unity and sense of purpose and were even less far-reaching in their demands than Yorkshire. Yet all through the winter of 1779-80 and the following spring, the Association movement made a lot of noise - while it also registered some tangible achievement, at least insofar as metropolitan radicalism was no longer left on its own.

In the long passage from Barham Downs which we have quoted at the beginning of this section, Bage is evidently thinking of the meetings that were held all over the country in 1779-80. Sir Ambrose Archer's letter is dated August 1780 when the Association movement was yet to slump into insignificance. But his interest in politics is casual, flippant, anything but serious. This is an index of Bage's own lack of commitment in politics. Judging from the novels, where ideas and ideologies are almost invariably peripheral to the central interests of the story, the sins of the administration and the imperfections of the Constitution are not of serious concern to him. They are at best a subject of critical but good-humoured mockery. His approach is that of the independent but uninvolved, respectable outsider, of the retired, detached, liberal intellectual.

It should also be noted that the grievances of Sir Ambrose Archer are mainly those of the Rockingham Whigs. Corruption, American war and the wasteful expenditure of public money by the government - these form the main planks in the associationist platform of Sir Ambrose and his friends. The bit about the members of Parliament endangering their healths by too long sitting may indeed be interpreted as a demand for shorter parliaments - triennial as

the Yorkshire Association waveringly or annual as Major Cartwright uncompromisingly demanded. But vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, a popular qualification test (a pledge to support reform measures) for parliamentary candidates, the possibility of a popular, national association eventually (if need be) taking over the functions of Parliament, adult manhood suffrage, or at least an increase in the number of the Knights of the shire - these (whether realistic or utopian) were some other of the items on the radical agenda of the period. Sir Ambrose's silence on these shows, more than a lack of adequate information and serious interest on Bage's part, the very limited nature of his radicalism.

But even a casual reference like the above indicates some awareness of the problems agitating the people's mind at the time. Moreover, in the second paragraph, Bage makes a fundamental, though general, statement of the radical position in, say, the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the complacent philistinism of an earlier period was giving place to serious misgivings about the state of the country. More and more people were now beginning to think that there was something rotten in the state of England, that England was not the best of all possible worlds with the best of all constitutions in the world. When Godwin called his first major work in prose fiction Things as they are (1794), he was articulating a similar consciousness.

(2)

In 1784, Robert Bage could afford a certain sang froid, a certain good-humoured flippancy, while speaking of the philistine pride of the Englishman in his country and its institutions. Ten years later, commenting on a similar phenomenon, Godwin betrays a touch of hysteria. While in jail, his Caleb Williams remarks,

> 'Thank God', exclaims the Englishman, 'we have no Bastille![1] Thank God, with us no man can be punished without a crime!' Unthinking wretch! Is that a country of liberty, where thousands languish in dungeons and fetters? Go, go, ignorant fool! and visit the scenes of our prisons! witness their unwholesomeness, their filth, the tyranny of their governors, the misery of their inmates! After that, show me the man shameless enough to triumph, and say, England has no Bastille! Is there any charge so frivolous, upon which men are not consigned to those detested abodes? Is there any villainy that is not practised by justices and prosecutors? But against all this perhaps you have been told there is redress. Yes; a redress, that it is the consummation of insult so much as to name! Where shall the poor wretch reduced to the last despair, and to whom acquittal perhaps comes just time enough to save him from perishing - where shall this man find leisure, and much less money, to see counsel and officers, and purchase the tedious dear-bought remedy of the law? ...
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> For myself, I looked around upon my walls, and forward upon the premature death I had too much reason to expect: I consulted my own heart, that whispered nothing but innocence; and I said, 'This is society. This is the object, the distribution of justice, which is the end of human reason. For this sages have toiled, and midnight oil has been wasted. This!'[2]

Godwin thinks of the prison as the microcosm of society. He does not make the kind of distinction here that Tom Paine makes in the opening paragraphs of Common Sense between society and government,[3] and perhaps thus shows a cynical distrust of organised order per se.

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1. In America about this time 'vile calumniators' used to call England "an insular Bastille". See Peter Porcupine, op.cit.,p.57
2. The Adventures of Caleb Williams (1794), 1966, Cassell Paperback, pp.199-200.
3. 'Society is produced by our wants, and Government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively, by uniting our affections: the latter negatively, by restraining our vices .. Society/ [Contd. on following page

But Caleb after all finds some redress in the end. He may be, among other things, a study in protracted but finally successful passive, disinterested resistance.[1] His ultimate vindication, however, is materially assisted by the benevolent intervention of the existing laws in the figure of a magistrate of integrity. England is not Stendhal's Parma which had no magistrate who would give a verdict contrary to the wishes of the reigning prince or the favourite minister. Moreover, though the laws can be exploited by the rich and the influential, they are also protective of the poor and the persecuted. Despite the reluctance of the magistrate to accept the charge of murder against a man of property and eminence, Falkland had to be summoned for trial if a 'competent witness' deposed against him.[2]

Godwin thus concedes some merit to English laws and institutions, but he does not find much in them to be proud of. It is not only in France but also in England that the liberty of the individual is severely restricted and laws function as a means of unnecessary coercion. Only a few pages later he reiterates the idea contained in the passage we have already quoted at length. Thomas, Falkland's footman, visits Caleb in jail and is appalled to see the inhuman conditions in which the prisoner is made to live:

Contd. from previous page]
Society, in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one .... Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of Kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of Paradise....' etc. Thomas Paine, Common Sense (1776), The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, ed. by P.S. Foner, New York, 1945, I, pp.4-5.

1. See Caleb Williams, op.cit., pp.344 and 358.
2. See ibid., pp.349-50.

'...Why I thought this was a Christian country; but this usage is too bad for a dog.'

'You must not say so, Thomas; it is what the wisdom of government has thought fit to provide.'

'Zounds, how I have been deceived! They told me what a fine thing it was to be an Englishman, and about liberty and property, and all that there; and I find it is all a flam. Lords, what fools we be! Things are done under our very noses, and we know nothing of the matter; and a parcel of fellows with grave faces swear to us, that such things never happen but in France, and other countries the like of that. Why, you ha'n't been tried, ha'you?'

'No.'

'And what signifies being tried, when they do worse than hang a man, and all beforehand? Well, Master Williams, you have been very wicked to be sure, and I thought it would have done me good to see you hanged. But, I do not know how it is, one's heart melts, and pity comes over one, if we take time to cool. I know that ought not to be; but, damn it, when I talked of your being hanged, I did not think of your suffering all this into the bargain.'[1]

Bage's Sir Ambrose speaks for middling proprietors, both in business and agriculture, who had to bear the burden of taxation levied by an unreformed House and occasioned by corruption, wasteful expenditure and wars. Godwin perhaps sees some kind of connexion between the ownership of property and the exercise of tyranny either by the propertied and influential people in their individual capacities or with the assistance of the coercive machinery of the state. Even so, the unpropertied can hold their own, in law, against the tyranny of the great.[2] At best, all that was needed was to bring

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1. Ibid., pp.222-3.

2. When in 1794, John Thelwall was in jail prior to trial for treason, Godwin wrote to him, 'It is good to be tried in England, where men are accustomed to some ideas of equity and law is not entirely what the breath of judges and prosecutors shall make it. And better, at least in such a country, is a plain and unsophisticated argument, making its way irrisistibly to the understanding -
"Than a successive title, long and dark,
Drawn from the musty rolls of Noah's Ark."'
The Life of John Thelwall, by his Widow, 1837, I, pp.207-8. (The work was projected into two volumes, but only one came out.) Godwin advised Thelwall, who was intending to make his own defence, not to waste his time collecting material from authorities. He himself/[Contd. on the next page

within easy reach of the people the apparatus for dispensing justice. An honest, independent magistracy, quick trials, reformed prisons - these would to a large extent meet his grievances. Paradoxically, the intervention of the state may be necessary for such reforms. As conveying the psychological climate of fear and terror generated by the arbitrary and indiscriminate state trials of the decade, the dark, sombre atmosphere pervading Caleb Williams has a lot of significance. As a radical document it hardly comes anywhere near the speculative, utopian, hopeful idealism of Political Justice, the extreme individualistic, anarchic position of a year ago. Here Godwin has limited objectives. He underlines the need for judicial and prison reforms and even makes out, by implication, a case for state interference.

(3)

In Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art (1796), a minister of the Church of Eng~~Scot~~land publishes a pamphlet where England is presented as a virtual paradise, overflowing with milk and honey, abundant in

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himself, however, in his "Cursory Strictures on the charge delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794", a work which can claim some credit for the acquittal of the accused, attempts a long and close examination of the 'musty rolls', the statutes and laws concerning treason. (See Howell's, State Trials, XXIV, pp.210-31, where the anonymous 'Strictures' are wrongly attributed to Felix Vaughan, a barrister of some repute.)
For a typical expression of our novelists' attitude to British laws, also see Robert Bage, The Fair Syrian, 1787, I, p.122, where the Marquis St. Claur, visiting England, writes to a friend in France, 'Would you believe it, Count, an English Earl was actually hanged some twenty years since, only for shooting his own servant. This enormity, these licentious islanders call liberty, and magna charta, and I know not what.'

"the fruits of the earth, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea" - "provision enough for all the people." It is a country of "valiant men, pretty women; statesmen wise and just; tradesmen abounding in merchandise and money; husbandmen possessing peace, ease, plenty: and all ranks, liberty." The pamphlet glowed with the dean's love for his country, and 'such a country as he described, it was impossible not to love.' Yet in private conversation the dean speaks of 'the hundreds of poor creatures who have not a morsel, or a drop of any thing to subsist upon, except bread and water; and even of the first a scanty allowance, but for which they are obliged to toil six days in the week, from sun to sun."[1] The ambitious, self-seeking dean is later on prepared to recant everything and write a scurrilous pamphlet about the state of the country - if he is baffled in his chances of promotion to a bishopric.[2] Meanwhile Mrs. Inchbald has amply underlined the falsity of claims about the general (and shared) prosperity of the country.

The criticism of the Englishman's podsnappian pride in his country drew attention to particular defects and failings. Sometimes it implied an attack on the mismanagement of institutions and emphasized the need for reform therein. Sometimes it pointed to the existence of corruption, and the need for eradicating it. Sometimes it questioned the fundamentals of the constitution and the validity of claims that the state of the country, administratively or

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1. Nature and Art, 1796, I, pp.99-101.
2. See ibid., II, pp.95-6.

economically, was never better. Mrs. Inchbald questioned the prosperity of the country on the ground of the poverty of a large mass of the people. Nature and Art came out in the lean years of the last decade of the century. Mrs. Inchbald, moreover, as we shall see, was very much less concerned than some others of the Godwin circle with problems of an abstract political and philosophical nature. By and large she drew upon life, as she knew it, instead of basing her approach on theoretical postulates. Even theoretical postulates may have a basis in reality, but abstract deductions from reality are not her forté.

(4)

Complete antitheses I suspect are not in the nature of social development in England in the second half of the eighteenth century, or even towards the very end. But as the century wears on, a polarisation begins to be noticeable with a more or less rigid alignment of individuals on political and policy matters - unlike the earlier period, say, before difficulties with America, when politics was generally a kind of clan fight for power, when loyalties were more to persons than to policies and principles. The popularity of the nature-art contrast in our period or of the contrast between moral categories as in the tales of Maria Edgeworth, or of the 'fathers and sons' theme points to this sharpening of contradictions.

One of the manifestations of this polarisation (the extent and depth of this polarisation is a different matter) is to be found in the divergence of opinion about the country and the constitution. When Bage, Godwin, Mrs. Inchbald tried to explode the myth of it-

could-not-be-better, they were not tilting at windmills. Speaking in the Commons on February 1, 1793, William Pitt claimed for the law of England that 'it affords equal security and protection to the high and the low, to the rich and the poor.' He went on to speak of 'the envied situation' of England, 'formed by the bounty of Providence for habitation and enjoyment, being equally removed from the polar frosts on the one hand, and the scorching heat of the torrid zone on the other; where the vicissitude of the seasons, and the variety of the climate, contribute to the vigour and health of its inhabitants, and to the fertility of its soil; where pestilence and famine are unknown, as also earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. with all their dreadful consequences.'[1]

Godwin could cite the first of these two observations as a motto to repudiate in Caleb Williams. But Pitt is not making an original formulation here. He is repeating, in this part of his speech, Blackstone's classical interpretation of the laws of England. At the very outset of his Commentaries Blackstone quotes the celebrated remark of Montesquieu that England is the only land in the universe in which 'political and civil liberty is the very end and scope of the constitution.' He goes on to speak of 'those equitable rules' 'by which the meanest individual is protected from the insults and oppression of the greatest.'[2] Godwin would not have exactly agreed.

The second of Pitt's observations provides an analogue in real life to the patriotic fervour and empty rhetoric of the dean in Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art. Pitt was of course rendered especially vulnerable because of the continued failure of crops over a number

1. Orations on the French War, Everyman's Library, 1925, p.4.
2. Sir William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England, (1765-9), 15th ed., 1809, I, pp.5-6.

of years and the adverse effect of the French war on trade. But if industrial progress had on the whole taken place, thus making some people complacent about the state of the country, it had also added to the misery of large numbers, making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

(5)

When Godwin finds some redress for Caleb Williams in the very laws he regards as vulnerable to pressure from the rich and the powerful, he is not making an unmerited or novelistic concession. His dilemma is the outcome and recognition of a certain superiority over the rest of the world that English laws could justifiably boast of. At least till about the emergence of a new nation state on the other side of the Atlantic, England's legal and political institutions were by far the most advanced in the world.

This does not mean that there were no grounds for complaint. The English Revolution, for one thing, was still unfinished.[1] The Commons was yet to become its sole master - with Lords and King playing second and third fiddle to it. Moreover, the existing laws of representation were becoming more and more outmoded and inadequate as great shifts in population and centres of activity took place. As it was, the Commons, the Earl of Chatham once remarked, was 'a parcel of younger brothers.' It could easily be managed by a Duke of

1. Richard Price, in his Old Jewry Sermon, reminded his audience that 'though the Revolution [of 1688] was a great work, it was by no means a perfect work; and that all was not then gained which was necessary to put the kingdom in the secure and complete possession of the blessings of liberty'. A Discourse on the Love of Our Country (1789), 6th ed., 1790, p.35.

Newcastle or by 'King's friends'.

In the eighteenth century, membership of Parliament generally depended upon connexion, on being a cousin or brother and so forth. The appointment to judicial and civil service (as also ecclesiastical) posts was guided by the same consideration. This led to incompetence and corruption all along the line. If a Henry or John Fielding could be found among the ranks of the magistracy, the majority were not unlike Justice Jonathan Thrasher. Or, if a Sir Launcelot Greaves set out to fight for the subject's constitutional rights, he not infrequently ran the risk of being imprisoned. This evidently was not a question of the laws not being properly worked, or of a handful or large number of unscrupulous, illiterate magistrates. The malady was deeper. Fielding partly saw this when in Amelia he said, 'Good laws should execute themselves in a well-regulated state'. Against the possible objection that the irregularities he intended to highlight in the novel 'do not lie in the laws themselves, but in the ill-execution of them', he argued that such a statement was 'no less an absurdity than to say of any machine that it is excellently made, though incapable of performing its functions'.[1] He did not follow up his logic and, like Godwin later, worked with limited objectives. He recommended the reform of prisons and advocated that civil laws should be made more stringent than they were.

We will return to the subject. Here we will only point out that the Englishman's pride in the material well-being of his country, as in the constitution, was not entirely misplaced either.

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1. Henry Fielding, Amelia (1751), Ch.2, The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. by James P. Browne, 1903, VIII, pp.151-2.

By the end of the century, immense possibilities of increased productivity had opened up. Before that, commerce on the seas had contributed to the prosperity of the country. Without these developments Godwin's utopia could not have been envisaged. The progress that had taken place over the last hundred years or so provided the perfectibilitarians with an argument in support of the possibility of greater improvement in future.[1] Bage's Hermsprong and Lindsay are both obliged to admit the indisputable fact of England's great material prosperity. They are, however, not without their misgivings about its nature and outcome. The commercial prosperity of the earlier era was in fact inducing lethargy and inaction, and retarding the development of industries. By the end of the century, some of the crude consequences of industrial development itself had become evident.

The British constitution, then, deserved commendation, and so did the British commercial-industrial progress. This naturally gave birth, in some people, to a philistine pride and complacency. But those who were handicapped by an outmoded system and were aware of the changing conditions could not feel happy and contented with things as they were. The expectations of an earlier revolution were yet to be fulfilled, while phenomenal and continued change in the structure of society called for a corresponding change in the political and legal institutions, as also in people's way of life.

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1. Richard Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, Dublin 1785, p.5, for example, refers to the scientific discoveries of the century and founds his hope of progress on them. Also see p.3: 'Light and knowledge have been gaining ground, and human life at present compared with what it once was, is much the same that a youth approaching to manhood is compared with an infant'.

III

(1)

'It is sometimes suggested', says Tawney, 'that the astonishing outburst of industrial activity, which took place after 1760, created a new type of economic character, as well as a new system of economic organization. In reality, the ideal which was later to carry all before it, in the person of the inventor and engineer and captain of industry, was well established among Englishmen before the end of the seventeenth century'.[1] Elsewhere he quotes a remark from 1656 which is a fair enough statement of the utilitarian position of a later day. Joseph Lee in his A Vindication of a Regulated Enclosure (1656) said, 'It is an undeniable maxim that everyone by light of nature and reason will do that which makes for his greatest advantage.... The advancement of private persons will be the advantage of the public.'[2]

The ideals, then, that were formulated in the seventeenth century (or before[3]) received a fresh impetus in our period. They had in fact never been absolutely abandoned or forgotten. There is a definite line of continuity, sometimes a bit obscure but never quite lost, from the seventeenth-century civil wars to the material developments and ideological burst in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. But evidently a lot of change also had taken place. In the present section and the next we shall attempt a

1. R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (1926), Pelican Books 1940, p.244.
2. Quoted by Tawney, op.cit., p.232.
3. See Christopher Hill, 'Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism', in Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, ed. by F.J. Fisher, 1961.

brief account of the continuity of the seventeenth-century tradition and then (in some detail) of the changing conditions in the eighteenth.

(2)

The importance of the seventeenth-century civil wars in English history can hardly be overemphasized, if only because till late there has been a tendency to overrate the spirit of 'compromise' initiated by the Restoration and confirmed by the Glorious Revolution - to overrate its importance at the cost of the sad, unpleasant episode of a bloody strife which was 'alien' to the 'essential' English character. For that matter the Interregnum was as much opposed to the levelling spirit as the later developments. But the trial and execution of Charles I, the leveller pamphlets, the army debates, the works of Harrington (who had opposed the King's execution but was sent to the Tower after the Restoration), Algernon Sidney (who had approved of the sentence and was beheaded on the Tower Hill after the discovery of the Rye House Plot) and others had raised ghosts it was difficult to lay. Caroline Robbins has shown how the ideals of the seventeenth-century commonwealthsman continued to agitate and inspire radicals all through the eighteenth century.[1] The fortunes of the Real Whigs and their ideals kept fluctuating. Sometimes the tradition lived on in the ritualistic celebration of the death anniversary of Charles I by a dinner of calf's head etc.[2] In most

1. See Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthsman, Harvard 1959.

2. See The Diary of Sylas Neville 1767-88,(ed. by Basil Cozins-Hardy), OUP 1950, p.90.

cases the history of the commonwealthsman is the history of failure and frustration. But people continued to owe allegiance to the good old cause. In moments of crisis, it supplied historical precedents and a ready-made formulation of discontents and resentments against the authority of the king or parliament, and served as at least a rallying point for a wider section of the population than those that already belonged to the 'political nation'.

Parallel to and sometimes closely bound up with the more or less purely secular-political ideals of the commonwealthsman ran the tradition of religious dissent. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, as Halévy points out, 'The orthodoxy of Dissent was in rapid decay'. On the one hand, Calvinism was undergoing 'decomposition', on the other 'petrifaction'. The democracy of the sects slowly 'degenerated into a plutocracy'.[1] Various factors seem to have contributed to these developments. Governmental policy of toleration did not leave much valid ground for resentment and resistance. The sects were also more divided among themselves than united in their opposition to the established church and authority. In at least some cases, people from the ranks of dissenters had succeeded in making money and acquiring property.

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1. Elie Halévy, England in 1815 (1913), Paperback, 1964, pp.404, 407 and 409. The whole of Part III, Ch.1, is relevant to the point at issue. See also Mark Rutherford, Revolution in Tanner's Lane on how religious dissent had by the beginning of the next century become much less militant than it was in the seventeenth century; and Charles Kingsley, Alton Locke where we have the dark Baptist minister whom Alton accuses of being 'one of those who creep into widows' houses, and for pretence make long speeches.' (Alton Locke, 1896, Ch.III, p.28). Blake's dislike of the sabbatarianism of the dissenting sects and their rigid morality is well known.

By the end of the century Quakers had most certainly 'prospered too much'. They had also 'lost some of their most energetic spirits in successive emigration to America'. They 'gave more to the social conscience of the middle class than to the popular movement', and were towards the end of the century preaching 'grateful subjection' to the king and the government.[1] Like the politics of the commonwealthsman,[2] the politics of religious dissent grew to be more and more aligned to the interests of the successful, money-making middle class. The poor insofar as they had failed in life had proved themselves to be destitute of merit and (in religious terms) forsaken of God. They were not of the elect.[3]

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1. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, 1965, p.31. Even in America, however, a section of Quakers were, at the time of the American war, advocating political quietism. cf. Tom Paine, 'Epistle to Quakers', Complete Writings, op.cit., pp.55-60. 'The principles of Quakerism', says Paine, 'have a direct tendency to make a man the quiet and inoffensive subject of any, and every government which is set over him'. (p.58) He quotes a Quaker pamphlet as speaking of "the just and necessary subordination to the King, and those who are lawfully placed in authority under him".(p.59) At a later day, Simeon Halliday (a Quaker in Uncle Tom's Cabin) helped slaves to escape to Canada, but he considered it necessary to contain the more exuberant, violent enthusiasm of his son. "Thee mustn't speak evil of thy rulers, Simeon," said his father, gravely. "The Lord only gives us our worldly goods that we may do justice and mercy; if our rulers require a price of us for it, we must deliver it up." (Ch.XIII, Cambridge, U.S., 1962, p.147).
2. See The Diary of Sylas Neville, op.cit., p.14.
3. A later day formulation of the attitude is provided by Dickens in Hard Times (1854), Bk.II, Ch.1: 'Any capitalist...who had made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn't each make sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, and more or less reproached them every one for not accomplishing the little feat. What I did you can do. Why don't you go and do it?' It is not an uncommon attitude even today. Professor Dicey even suggested a connexion between 'the appeal of the Evangelicals to personal religion' and 'the appeal of Benthamite Liberals to individual energy'. cf. Tawney, op.cit., p.228.

But despite an increasing identity of interests with the Establishment, and probably because of their very acquisition of property, the new money-making class of businessmen, industrialists and manufacturers (mostly non-conformist in religion), felt inconvenienced by the political leadership of the landed and mercantile aristocracy and its pernicious influence on the national character. The toleration obtained at the time of the 'Glorious Revolution' was also imperfect.[1] Religious dissent, thus, even while its militancy was in decay, had a positive, significant role to play in politics, an axe to grind and weild.

Moreover, within the history of religious dissent, there was the tradition of Bunyan and 'the poor man's religion'. 'Pilgrim's Progress', says E.P. Thompson, 'is, with Rights of Man, one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement.'[2] The internalisation of social conflict, the projection of it into a conflict between, say, Mansoul and Diabolus, the withdrawal from the 'kingdom without' to the 'kingdom within' is the product of frustration born of defeat. But mixed with 'political quietism', there remained 'a kind of slumbering Radicalism...which might in any more hopeful context break into fire once more'. Through the whole period of the Industrial Revolution, the sects, constantly multiplying through dissensions and splits, manifest this tension between the 'kingdom within' and the 'kingdom without', and a tension between

1. See Price, Love of Our Country, op.cit., pp.35-39.
2. Op.cit., p.31.

'authoritarian and democratic tendencies'.[1] An early example of a similar tension, as we shall see, is provided by the catholic Mrs. Inchbald in her Nature and Art.

(3)

While the seventeenth-century ideals lived on and were yet to be realized, major changes in the social structure were taking place. By the beginning of the eighteenth century trade had wrought a remarkable change in British society. Defoe's The Complete English Tradesman (1726) points out that the early eighteenth-century English aristocracy was not necessarily nor mainly based in land.[2] It derived strength from trade and commerce. Moreover, the merchant, even where he did not already belong to the ranks of the nobility, could, by virtue of his wealth, force his way up into high society and had to be accorded, though occasionally a grudging, welcome.

Defoe gloats over the admission of merchants into high society; in their triumph over the nobility he finds reason to rejoice. But the merchants were not his chief concern. At the very outset of his work he defines his categories with characteristic precision of detail[3] when he says that he is not concerned with, 'nor any part of

1. Ibid., pp.30 (See also p.36: 'one feels often that the dormant seeds of political Radicalism lie within [the intellectual history of Dissent] ready to germinate whenever planted in a beneficial and hopeful context'.), 46,50.

2. See Daniel Defoe, The Complete English Tradesman, etc., 3rd ed., 1732, Letter XXII, pp.304-19.

3. And as characteristically, perhaps legitimately, forgets his distinctions when, speaking of the social achievements of businessmen, he lumps together merchants and tradesmen. See ibid., pp.39 and 304-19.

[his work] directed' to those who trade beyond the sea and are called merchants 'by way of honourable distinction'. By tradesmen he means 'all sorts of warehouse keepers, shopkeepers, whether wholesale dealers, or retailers of goods', 'grocers, mercers, linen and woollen drapers, Blackwellhall factors, tobacconists, haberdashers, whether of hats or small wares, glovers, hosiers, milliners, booksellers, stationers, and all other shopkeepers, who do not actually work upon, make, or manufacture the goods they sell'. His first reason why 'the trade of England is greater and more considerable than that of any other nation' is that 'England produced more goods as well for home consumption as for foreign exportation, ... than any other nation in the world'.[1] But his interest lies not in the 'manufacturer' but in the small shopkeeper with interests in inland trade. It is this lower middle class, by and large, that he wrote for - a class which had to be reminded of the achievements of some individuals from its ranks to bolster up its spirit, a class which had to be told to remain humble and patient in the face of the greatest provocation from customers, whether they bought anything or not,[2] but a class which later on came forward with its savings and experience to finance and run industrial projects.[3]

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1. Ibid., pp.1-3. Defoe's recognition of the importance of industrial productivity anticipates the later emphasis on manufacture rather than trade.

2. See ibid., pp.85-96. Compare with this the attitude, from a later day, of a more aggressively class conscious Benjamin Franklin who is said to have gone on increasing the price of a book as a customer haggled over it.

3. Cf. J.H. Plumb, England in The Eighteenth Century 1714-1815 (1950), Pelican Books, 1964, p.78, 'The early industrial capitalists... all emerged from the lower middle classes.' Paul Mantoux, however, says that the class of industrial capitalists had diverse origins and was 'made up of very different elements'. See The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century, (first translated into English in 1928), University Paperbacks, 1964, pp.367-73.

Now these shopkeepers of Defoe, even in 1727, were getting restive on political issues. Defoe observed that 'never was the Gazette so full of the advertisements of commissions of bankrupt as since our shopkeepers are so much engaged in parties, formed into clubs to hear news, read journals, and study politicks'. He cites instances of 'merchants' and 'tradesmen' who were invited by kings and courts to give counsel on subjects of great moment. It is in the company of princes that the tradesman eventually belongs, but before he can establish and claim his right, his 'proper business is in his shop or warehouse'.[1] He should be diligent and hard working before he can enjoy the political fruits of his industry. But on Defoe's own admission his shopkeeper was beginning to show a certain impatience of the existing political institutions: witness the gazette.[2]

(4)

In An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc., published in 1751, Fielding noticed and complained of a gap between the constitution of the country and the condition and status of the people. He spoke of the common error of considering the

1. Ibid., pp.38-39.

2. Plumb, op.cit., p.30, quotes de Saussure, a Swiss traveller, as writing a year after the publication of Defoe's Tradesman, 'All Englishmen are great newsmongers. Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee rooms in order to read the daily news. Nothing is more entertaining than hearing men of this class discussing politics and topics of interest concerning royalty'. Workmen could mean anything, but it is likely that de Saussure was referring to the same class of people as Defoe.

constitution as 'something uniform and permanent as if [it] partook rather of the Nature of the Soil than of the Climate, and was as fixed and constant as the former, not as changing and variable as the latter'. He thought that the customs and manners of people had changed and yet 'the exterior Form of Government' and even the Law, 'notwithstanding all its Alterations' remained as they were.

Of the change among the people Fielding found nothing so remarkable as that in the status of the last of the three known divisions in society: the Nobility, the Gentry, and the Commonalty. The most important single factor responsible for this change was 'the Introduction of Trade', which had indeed 'given a new face to the whole Nation', and 'subverted the former State of Affairs'. It had altered for the worse 'the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the people, more especially of the lower sort', and had given them wealth, cunning, luxury, pride and arrogance.

Fielding conceded that the evils produced by trade had their compensating 'emoluments': 'Life is imbellished with every Ornament, and furnished with every Comfort which it is capable of tasting'. He thought of the evils, in certain respects, as not only necessary but useful, for 'Trade and luxury do indeed support each other'. All that could (and perhaps should) be done, therefore, is 'to restrain and palliate the evil consequences' of the growth of trade. Fielding tried to point out in his pamphlet how far and how the politician should interfere with the laxity that had crept into the national life.

For this, he thought, Civil Power should be strengthened. As 'voluntary submission' is difficult to obtain, as other 'powers',

particularly the power of 'the Purse of Money', are so 'extremely apt to rebel, and to assert their own superiority', Civil Power should be brought up to date and streamlined. The 'principal design' of Fielding's work was

> to rouse the CIVIL Power from its present lethargic state. **A Design which alike opposes those wild Notions of Liberty** that are inconsistent with all Government, and those **pernicious schemes of Government, which are destructive of** true Liberty. However contrary indeed these Principles may **seem to each other, they have both the same Common Interest;** or rather, the former are the wretched tools of the latter; **for Anarchy is almost sure to end in some Kind of Tyranny.**[1]

The wild notions of liberty are more pernicious than the pernicious schemes of Government. Fielding, as a magistrate, took the first serious steps towards establishing in London an efficient police system. He wanted increased power in the hands of the civil authority, an efficient constabulary, a competent, knowledgeable, and honest magistracy, modification of the poor laws, better management of work houses, some check on the movement of the poor vagabond from one parish to another, etc.[2]

Most respectable London citizens would have applauded Fielding's project of reform on these points. After all, he was here not so much worried about the prevalence of luxury, of gaming and drinking among the rich as among the vulgar.[3] Today one would tend to

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1. Henry Fielding, An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase in Robbers etc. (1751), 2nd ed., 1751, Preface, pp.xi-xxxii.
2. On some of these points see another pamphlet by Fielding, A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor, for Amending their Morals, and for Rendering them useful Members of the Society, 1753.
3. See Enquiry, op.cit., p.6, 'I am not here to satirize the Great among whom luxury is probably rather a moral than a political Evil', and p.7, 'Could luxury be confined to the Palaces of the Great, the Society would not perhaps be much affected with it'. The section-headings are also suggestive.

suspect the magistrate in him and may not feel quite happy with his care for the peace and property of the rich.[1] But nobody is likely to disagree with him when he reiterated the point of a gap between the constitution and the state of the country and said that

> to conceive that so great a Change as this in the People [in the status of the Commonalty] should produce no Change in the Constitution, is to discover, I think, as great Ignorance as would appear in the Physician who should assert, that the whole State of the Blood may be entirely altered from poor to rich, from cool to inflamed, without producing any Alteration in the Constitution of the Man.[2]

Those who turned robbers were not much likely to have the power of the Purse of Money behind them. Those who had it were certainly apt to rebel and while they would have agreed with Fielding in his plea for more stringent civil laws, they were beginning to ask for reform in a wider field and for greater say in the political affairs of the state.

(5)

> London is literally new to me; new in its streets, houses, and even in its situation; as the Irishman said, 'London is now gone out of town'. What I left open fields, producing hay and corn, I now find covered with streets, and squares, and palaces, and churches. I am credibly informed, that, in the space of seven years, eleven thousand new houses have been built in one quarter of Westminster, exclusive of what is daily added to other parts of this unwieldy metropolis. Pimlico and Knightsbridge are now almost joined to Chelsea and Kensington; and if this infatuation continues for half a century, I suppose the whole county of Middlesex will be covered with brick.[3]

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1. See, in this context, Malvin R. Zirker, Jr., Fielding's Social Pamphlets, University of California Press, 1966.
2. Enquiry, op.cit., p.xxv.
3. Matthew Bramble in Smollett's Humphrey Clinker (1771), The Works of Tobias Smollett, 1872, pp.118-9.

Matthew Bramble goes on to notice that 'London and Westminster are much better paved and lighted than they were formerly'. The streets are 'spacious, regular, and airy'. 'The houses generally convenient'. 'The bridge at Blackfriars is a noble monument of taste and public spirit', 'a work of...magnificence and utility'. Yet, the capital is become 'an overgrown monster'. The enclosure movement is the most potent of the reasons for the increase in city's population and size; and trade is the 'grand cause' of the excessive crime, luxury and corruption. Traders have acquired the habits of the nobility, but fashionable mores is not confined to the 'opulent citizen'. 'Every clerk, apprentice, and even waiter of a tavern or coffee-house, maintains a gelding by himself, or in partnership, and assumes the air and apparrel of a petit-maître'. Journeymen-tailors, serving men, and abigails, 'disguised like their betters', resort to the gayest places of public entertainment. The 'incongruous monster, called the public', has no idea of 'elegance and propriety'. What suits them is 'noise, confusion, glare and glitter'.[1]

There is no mistaking Bramble's sympathies. Despite his admiration for works of public utility and for the improved condition of roads and lighting in London, he is critical of the devaluation of the aristocratic ideals of elegance and propriety. His is no doubt the appraisal of a man who is prickly on the surface, tender at heart, has the gout and is by nature retired. But when he complains that 'there is no distinction or subordination left',

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1. Ibid., pp.119-21.

he is evidently speaking for social and political privilege. He resents that 'The hod-carrier, the low mechanic, the tapster, the publican, the shop-keeper, the petti-fogger, the citizen, and courtier, all tread upon the kibes of one another'.[1]

London then was fast growing in size and population. In the 'sixties of the century, it was also in a state of turmoil. This may have been an additional cause for Bramble's (and perhaps Smollett's) distrust of insubordination. But the people whom Bramble seems to resent most - the vulgar, lower classes, the serving men and abigails, the casual labourer, who formed the mass of the population, and were the nightmare of politicians and civil authorities, were still outside the 'political nation'. They were, Plumb rightly observes, used by the opposition as a threat, and 'by the government as an excuse for executive action that smacked of tyranny; but all parties were unanimous in feeling that the unbridled licence of the destitute justified the savage intensification of the laws dealing with crimes against property'. The unformed resentment of the poor against governmental authority found expression at the time of riots and made them useful material for 'unscrupulous politicians' and demagogues to work on,[2] but their rebellion was yet, to borrow a term from Hobsbawm, primitive or pre-political.[3] They served as no more than a kind of political ballast. In the 'sixties and the 'seventies of the century, the

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1. Ibid., p.121.
2. Plumb, op.cit., pp.16-7.
3. Cf. E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (1959), Manchester, 1963.

principle was being formulated that the person and not only the property of the subject constituted a stake in the country, that is, (to leave out other implications), the principle of manhood suffrage was beginning to be advanced.[1] But the real challenge, during the 'sixties, to the authority of the king and the unreformed House of Commons came from the growing commercial interests in the metropolis. It came from the City of London, 'a great, self-conscious community', a 'proud, vigorous, thrusting society of middling tradesmen, merchants, and craftsmen of every sort, with a scattering of wealthy financiers, and professional men (especially lawyers)'. Their Member of Parliament, Alderman William Beckford (father of the novelist and a friend of Chatham's - some say lackey), while pleading the importance of middle ranks, declared in the Commons in 1761, "The scum is as mean as the dregs, and as to your nobility, about 200 men of quality, what are they to the body of the nation? Why, Sir, they are subalterns.... They receive more from the public than they pay to it."[2] Within a few years the City's defiance of authority, of the King and Parliament, found expression in the Wilkes affair.

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1. John Wilkes, in his Commons speech on Parliamentary Reform, March 21, 1776, said, 'The meanest mechanic, the poorest peasant and day-labourer, has important rights.... Some share therefore in the power of making those laws, which deeply interest them, and to which they are expected to pay obedience, should be reserved even to this inferior, but most useful set of men in the community'. S. MacCoby (ed. by), The English Radical Tradition, 1952, pp.31-2. (Wilkes's words are reminiscent of the Leveller Colonel Rainborough: 'for really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he'. A.S.P. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, 1938, p.53, quoted by E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p.22) Also see, pp.32-34 for Major Cartwright's views on the subject.
2. Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, 1962, pp.8-9.

(6)

In 1727 Defoe advised his tradesmen to keep off politics. About a quarter of a century later, in a more or less similar compendium or guide book for businessmen as Defoe's, Malachy Postlethwayt considers it expedient to include an article on Parliament,[1] and makes out a case for increased metropolitan representation in the Commons. In a separate table he shows that the areas of Middlesex and Essex, with the greater part of London, paid a larger proportion of the land tax than eleven counties of the north and west, yet had but sixteen members to their 216.[2]

Postlethwayt strikes another significant note about the political temper of the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. He supports the policy of war for the preservation of Britain's colonies abroad against possible encroachment by the French. We may recall that in 1754 the Anglo-French war in North America had already broken out. In the colonies indeed fighting between the two chief rivals for an overseas empire had never really stopped since and even after the end of the Spanish war. Postlethwayt, in a long dedication[3] prefixed to the second volume, which came out in 1755, boasts of the peaceful policy and intentions of the House of Hanover, but also sounds

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1. The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, 1751-5, II, pp.413-22. The first volume of this work came out in 1751, the second in 1755. The Dictionary is translated from French, but adapted to accommodate more particularly the interests of 'Trade and Navigation of these Kingdoms.' Probably no more than a useful compilation with long traces of plagiarism (vide the DNB), the Dictionary had run into the fourth edition by 1774.

2. Ibid., II, p.415.

3. To the Right Honourable the Marquis of Granby, Major-General of His Majesty's Forces, and Member of Parliament for Cambridge.

a war cry against the French. He is loyal to the king and 'the present Constitution in Church and State', but he is against arbitrary power. Britons, he says, have been always governed by 'Laws of their own making'. Now this liberty is threatened by the possibility of British trade and commerce falling into French Popish hands. 'If we lose our Trade, we lose our All; the Loss of our Liberties and our Constitution must inevitably follow the Loss of our Commerce and eternal Vassalage must be the doom of free-born Britons.' Above all, Britain could not afford to be divested of its 'most invaluable Colonies and Plantations [in North America], which are the Principal source of her Wealth and her Power.'[1]

Postlethwayt's militarism, his advocacy of trade and commerce, his disapproval of the ridiculously low metropolitan representation, underline the existence of a vital connexion, at this stage, between the demand for parliamentary reform, imperialist jingoism and the business interests in London - interests whose demand for a firm foreign policy had long been ignored. Soon, however, riding the crest of a popular movement William Pitt would be taken into the Government to pursue a policy of war.

(7)

Despite the process initiated by the 1688 Settlement to achieve co-operation between the executive authority and the legislative, the executive authority of the King had, since the civil wars, never been viewed quite without suspicion. It was always likely to get the

1. Ibid., II, pp.iv-v. The article on Parliament echoes the sentiments.

blame for whatever upset the precarious balance. Even more important than this century old distrust of authority and the need to strengthen the Commons vis-a-vis the King and Lords, or at least bound up with these, was the question of unequal representation.[1] It was arguable that the executive authority could assert itself against the representatives of the people, because the important interests in the country did not have 'adequate weight' in Parliament.[2] From a closed oligarchy Parliament needed to be changed into a more open place giving the growing interests a more equitable say in the administration, commensurate with their position in the country.

The system of representation and other anomalies in the Constitution had come in for attack before the 'fifties and 'sixties of the century. The repeal of the Septennial Act of 1716 had long been a 'Tory' and 'Country' demand. Richardson's Lovelace favoured annual parliaments (and, incidentally, annual marriages). The Place Acts had drawn attention to organic defects in the Constitution (and not only to corruption in the administration), and occasionally writers in the London press had asked for change in the system of borough representation and for redistribution of seats.[3]

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1. Richard Price makes out the point in his Old Jewry Sermon. After pointing out that the religious toleration achieved in 1688 was imperfect, he goes on, 'But the most important instance of the imperfect state in which the Revolution left our constitution, is the INEQUALITY OF OUR REPRESENTATION'. op.cit., p.39. Wilkes, before that, had said that 'the present unfair and inadequate representation of the people of England in Parliament' was 'one of the most striking and important' of the abuses of the government in Britain. Cf. MacCoby, op.cit., p.28.
2. See Wilkes's Commons speech on Parliamentary Reform, 1776, MacCoby, op.cit., pp.29-30.
3. Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, 1962, p.16.

Now like other sections of the population in the first half of the eighteenth century, the ordinary shop-keepers and merchants in London had been fed upon the opposition propaganda of the Tory 'patriots'. But they were essentially Whigs. The gulf between them and Bolingbroke was 'too great to be bridged'. With their 'distinctive ethos' of industry and thrift, they could not always side with Walpole either, 'for they believed in plain, fair and honest dealing and the control of government by a Parliament - not the reverse, which was Walpole's way'. They also found themselves ranged against the directors of chartered companies, the merchant-princes, who had 'close financial ties with the government' and who, in politics, 'tended to support Walpole and call themselves Whigs', and who were increasingly felt to be a hindrance to trade. 'Their fervid isolationism and thirst for empire awaited the voice of Chatham'.[1]

A narrow oligarchy had long excluded Chatham from a place in the government and after he had served his turn, he was again cast out. He amply demonstrated the closed character of the Commons and how it could thwart the economic and political ambitions of the City. From the victorious conduct of the war he emerged a popular, even a national hero. Smollett (or whoever it was that wrote Adventures of an Atom - 1769) attributed Chatham's success to lucky flukes, to his cunning and demagogy, and the gullibility of the 'many-headed hydra', the mob. Whatever the cause of his success, the ambitious commercial interests in London saw in the victories of the war at least a partial realization of their dream of empire. Bute's peace

1. Plumb, op.cit., pp.14-15.

policy incensed most of them and once again revealed how an old-fashioned political system, based mainly in land, could be a nuisance.

Wilkes started his political career as a protégé of Temple and Chatham. He was first set up as a journalist to oppose the peace policy of the government. It is perhaps not altogether immaterial that this ex-member of the Medmenham Club, this spendthrift of lax morals, had not much respect for the middle class way of life, nor did the City, though it paid his debts, much approve of him. It may not be immaterial again that eventually, from the sheer momentum of his career and at times in desperation, he went farther to the left than any of his contemporaries, though in the Gordon Riots he turned against his erstwhile supporters, the populace of London, and then turned away from politics. But surely it is more important that the movement that grew up around him had its origin in the City of London's Opposition to the government. Despite their dislike of him, the metropolitan trading interests supported and financed him, and if the Wilkite movement revealed a tension between the king and the people, it as much revealed a tension between Parliament and the City.

(8)

The Fool of Quality by Henry Brooke, the first novel that we have discussed in detail, came out between 1766 and 1770. Though backward looking in certain respects, it is the product, as we shall aee, of the transition from the vigorous, thrusting imperialism of the Seven Years' War period to, say, the declaration of independence

by America, when in 1776, by a not very fortuitous coincidence, Adam Smith produced the first definitive statement of the idea of free trade and free enterprise and when wider and wider sections of the business community, except that marginal fraction of influential people who flourished on war contracts, were beginning to turn towards a liberal foreign policy and the policy of trade unobstructed by governments and wars.

The Seven Years' War had brought victories to England. But it also led to depression, to increased taxation, to differences with America, to the crystallization of free trade ideas, to a pacifist approach to foreign policy, to an acceleration (even if temporary) of reform movements. By the end of the war, in fact, sections of trading interests in London had become disposed to the idea of peace. Later on even those elements that had criticised Bute's peace policy opposed the war with America. Chatham makes a pathetic figure going to the Lords on crutches and pleading for sanity. But he wanted conciliation in order to retain political control for the mother country. He was nevertheless opposed to taxation and war. So was Adam Smith, who did not desire a breach either, and advanced the idea of some kind of a commonwealth.

In Robert Bage we shall have occasion to see the shift of opinion, in certain quarters, from a policy of tactical conciliation to unqualified support for independence. His opposition to the American War anticipates the opposition, at a later day, of the free-traders and industrialists to the Orders in Council prohibiting trade with America during the Napoleonic Wars in the first decades of the next century.

Meanwhile, Samuel Foote's play Nabob (1778) gives us some idea of the growing dissatisfaction with the ways and manners of the retired East India merchant. Foote seems to have made capital of the parliamentary enquiry (1772-3) on Robert Clive, who was, like Warren Hastings later, acquitted. Clive, incidentally, was supported by both Wilkes and Chatham, the favourite grandson of 'Diamond' Pitt. But his type was not to find much favour with Robert Bage, whose Birimport, in Man as he is (1792), a retired East India merchant, is hardly a lovable character. The fictional nabobs, like the trials of Clive and Hastings, are indications of a movement away from parasitism on the empire to reliance on the development of indigenous manufacturing, industrial potential. The wealth of a nation, Adam Smith had pointed out, lay not in trade and the accumulation of gold but in the ability to produce better and cheaper goods for a competitive market.

IV

(1)

'In the age of the American Revolution', says Ian Christie, 'the reform movement in Britain derived its momentum mainly from the resentments of frustrated minorities already in enjoyment of constitutional rights but unable to rectify circumstances of an essentially temporary character to which they were opposed'.[1] It may not be very clear why exactly and why in particular the Yorkshire country gentlemen should be in the forefront of the Association movement.[2] But broadly speaking it can be safely said about the radical platform in London that, at least during the period before the American war, it upheld the claims of the commercial interests in the City against the privileges of a closed oligarchy.

By now, however, another factor in the economic life of the country had about come to maturity. The story of the revolution in industry is too familiar to need any recapitulation here. One of its consequences was the rise of the new class of industrialists and manufacturers in the provinces, who found the civil and religious policy of the country a serious impediment in the way of their ambitions. Since 1751, when Fielding, for different reasons altogether, criticised the constitution as static and old-fashioned, the change in the status of the 'commonalty' of the country had continued apace and had gathered momentum. The gap between the political needs of the day and the established institutions in law, politics, religion had thus grown wider over the years. There was more reason than ever before to think that English liberty, as Godwin's Thomas later put it, was all a flam.

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1. Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, op.cit., p.6.
2. Ibid., pp.228-30.

A constitution based in land, and giving unequal weightage to hereditary property and honours,[1] was hardly likely to be acceptable to self-made men who were not necessarily nor all of them self-made humbugs like Bounderby. They in any case spoke of individual merit as the only reliable criterion of social-political recognition. Religious disabilities and the rule of oligarchy based on an outmoded system of representation had to be got rid of to ensure the free play of talent, as the system of trade regulations and protection had to be abolished to ensure the free development of industry and commerce.

American independence was an index of at least a partial victory of these demands and needs. And in the same year as America declared herself independent, Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations and Bentham's A Fragment on Government came out. Both these authors were to be recognised as prophets and philosophers of the nineteenth-century Manchester school. Of these, Bentham's major work was yet to be done and his influence in England was in any case delayed. Adam Smith's influence was immediate and extended to people like William Pitt and Edmund Burke. The new creed and its implications were not fully nor consistently accepted by all those that were influenced by Adam Smith nor by those that stood to gain by it. But here was the ideology of a new class and a new era. It advocated peace, not war; open, free competition among individuals

1. See Edmund Burke, Reflections on the French Revolution (1790), Everyman's Library, 1960, p.48: 'as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and timid, it never can be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominant in the representation. It must be represented too in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected'. Burke is evidently fighting a losing battle.

and nations instead of protection rackets run by governments at home and in foreign trade; emphasis on manufacture rather than commerce; commercial treaties based on the principle of reciprocity.

By 1776, then, and most certainly by 1789, the 'free-traders' (though the term may be an anachronism for our period)had developed interests and an ideology on which to base their political claims. Within three years of the end of the American war, the scattered organisations of industrialists had banded together in a national body and in the spring of 1785 the General Chamber of Manufacturers held its first meeting with Josiah Wedgwood in the chair. One of the pamphlets circulated was written by James Watt. The objective of the organization was limited to influencing government policy on matters concerning or affecting the interests of the manufacturer. But most early industrialists, Wedgwood, Wilkinson, Boulton were also democrats[1] and the tendency of an association like theirs is not difficult to visualize. By the end of the century Birmingham (where Watt and Boulton had their famous factory in Soho) had as much become the centre of radical activity as London had long been. The political claims of Sheffield, Norwich, Nottingham, Manchester, (and not only of Essex and Middlesex)[2] were now being advanced. Dissenters were now clamouring louder than ever before for the repeal of the Test Laws - as well as for an equitable system of representation. It is significant, and hardly surprising, that

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1. Watt was a Tory, but his son, a Manchester businessman, was a democrat. See Veitch, The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform, op. cit. pp.189-91

2. In 1776 Wilkes had demanded in Parliament that 'the rich, populous, trading towns, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and others, be permitted to send deputies to the great council of the nation'. MacCoby, op.cit., p.31.

both Richard Price and Josiah Wedgwood welcomed the French Revolution.

With the rise of the industrialist took place the rise of the modern factory worker. The interest and participation of the north country worker in the activities of the London Corresponding Society show that in the last decade of the century and in the new industrial cities the radical movement was not entirely confined to the middle class and the worker had begun to take interest in politics. The rule of the oligarchy was now also challenged by the modern proletariat.

But anything like a complete and sincere alliance between the worker and his master was out of question. Their interests, as Adam Smith had already pointed out, were in a kind of permanent conflict. 'The workmen', he said, 'desire to get as much, the masters to give as little, as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower, the wages of labour'.[1] The increasing accumulation of capital and the conditions of modern factory production accentuated this basic clash of interests. The mechanization of industry, by making possible a growing division of labour, opened up, as some people saw and were enthused by, vast unending vistas of continually increasing happiness for mankind. But the dark satanic mills brought with them a lot of misery too. The war with France added to it. A ripe, mature working class movement was yet to emerge but the ominous rumblings of future events could already be heard. In another ten years or so, under the continued stress of the French

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1. Wealth of Nations (1776), Edinburgh, 1809, (Bk.I, Ch.VIII), Vol.I, pp.88-9.

war, while the industrialist would be wishing ill of the government and Wellington, the worker would be breaking machines in the factory. Even Peterloo and the Chartist movement were not far in the future.

A schematic account like the above is of course only partly true. The course of politics, like that of true love, never runs smooth, and some important qualifications must here be made. First, the industrialists were making money, buying property, marrying into noble families, and being ennobled like the first Sir Robert Peel. Though ability and individual merit were their watchwords, they found some kinship with Burke in his plea for an oligarchy of large properties. They also shared with him his distrust of the rabble, the swinish multitute - though for Burke the term had a much wider signification. From whatever reason, constitutionalism remained an important feature of British radicalism in the French Revolutionary period. Second, if radical working class societies came up in the last decade of the century, king and church mobs were as much a representative phenomenon of the period, wrecking havoc on radical, if prosperous, middle class citizens. Third, at this stage it may not be necessary, nor very easy, to draw a line between working class and middle class radical groups.

In the following pages, an attempt will be made to examine some expressions of the radical point of view from about the American Revolution to the end of the century. For obvious reasons, the period after 1789 has received closer attention than the period before. And for not very obvious reasons the choice of material is determined not so much by its 'representativeness' as by its

ability to convey an idea of the changing pattern of beliefs and alignments.

(2)

Bentham's first published work, A Fragment on Government (1776), is an attack on a fraction of Blackstone's introduction to his Commentaries. It shows that theoretical recognition of the need for reform based on 'fundamental' principles and that distrust of a complacent faith in the virtues of the Establishment which were characteristic of radicals over the remaining years of the century and beyond.

Bentham early projected a magnum opus on laws not as they were but as they ought to be. When he was drawn away to attempt a critique of the Commentaries his forensic talent was directed at the introduction where general principles were stated, where his adversary appeared more in the role of a 'censor' than an 'expositor'. He left alone the other parts - a compilation of statutes and precedents.

A Fragment on Government was a challenge to the easy optimism of Blackstone. Bentham exposed all talk of the perfection of the British constitution as so much nonsense. He conceded some merit to his senior and concurred with his rejection of social contract, but pointed out contradictions and fallacies (a favourite preoccupation) in his arguments. He upheld utility, instead of Blackstone's reasonableness, as the grand criterion of law. He questioned the

need or validity of an appeal to the deity in matters concerning the state. Theology on such an occasion, he said, is impertinent.[1]

But Bentham was most savage in his remarks on Blackstone's hostility to innovations and reformation. Blackstone had said,

> The common law of England has fared like other venerable edifices of antiquities, which rash and unexperienced workmen have ventured to new dress and refine, with all the rage of modern improvement. Hence frequently its symmetry has been destroyed, its proportions distorted, and its majestic simplicity changed for specious embellishments and fantastic novelties... almost all the perplexed questions, almost all the niceties, intricacies, and delays, (which have sometimes disgraced the English, as well as other courts of justice) owe their original not to the common law itself, but to innovations that have been made in it by acts of parliament.[2]

The system was perhaps not exactly perfect if it could be subverted by parliament. But Blackstone's hostility to innovations is plain enough. Bentham considered this 'ungenerous antipathy' to reformation the worst blemish, and imputed to it the 'general vein of obscure and crooked reasoning' in the work.[3] If, Bentham argued, 'a perfect state of nature', 'a state of society perfectly natural' is 'an extravagant supposition', 'a government in this sense perfect ... a state of society perfectly political, a state of perfect political union, a state of perfect submission in the subject, of perfect authority in the governor, is no less so.'[4]

Despite the word-chopping and the turgid verbosity of his

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1. Jeremy Bentham, A Fragment on Government, etc. (1776), ed. by F.C. Montagu, Oxford 1891, p.166.
2. Commentaries, op.cit., p.9.
3. A Fragment, op.cit., p.94.
4. Ibid., pp.139-40.

style that reviewers and contemporaries remarked upon,[1] Bentham's vehemence is often refreshing:

> It is wonderful how forward some have been to look upon it as a kind of presumption and ingratitude, and rebellion, and cruelty, and I know not what besides, not to allege only, nor to own, but to suffer any one so much as to imagine, that an old-established law could in any respect be a fit subject of condemnation.... I know not for what good reason it is that the merit of justifying a law when right should have been thought greater, than that of censuring it when wrong....
>
> Thus much is certain; that a system that is never to be censured will never be improved: that if nothing is ever to be found fault with, nothing will ever be mended: and that a resolution to justify everything at any rate, and to disapprove of nothing, is a resolution which, pursued in future, must stand as an effectual bar to all the additional happiness we can hope for; pursued hitherto would have robbed us of that share of happiness we enjoy already.
>
> ...Whatever now is established, once was innovation.[2]

Blackstone and Bentham between them strike the key-note of the controversy between the apologists of the Establishment and its opponents that raged so wildly in the last decade of the century. The passage just quoted, as well as some others, could provide an apt answer to some of Burke's reflections on the French Revolution.[3]

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1. Reviewing An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, the Analytical said that 'the observations are delivered in a manner too abstracted to render the subject popular; and they are often involved in a peculiar phraseology, with which those who read merely for amusement, may possibly be disgusted'. (Analytical Review, 1789, V, p.310). Hazlitt's quip that 'His [Bentham's] works have been translated into French - they ought to be translated into English' (The Spirit of the Age, The World's Classic, 1904, pp.14-5) is well known.

2. Ibid., p.101. See also p.104 where Bentham disapproves of the practice of yielding 'the same abject and indiscriminating homage to laws here, which is paid to the despot elsewhere'. On the same page again: 'Of all men, surely none so fit as that sort of man who is ever on his knees before the footstool of Authority, and who, when those above him, or before him, have pronounced, thinks it a crime to have an opinion of his own'.

3. See Burke, Reflections, op.cit., p.83: 'We know that we have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped/[Contd. on the next page

In fact, while Blackstone with his 'venerable edifices of antiquities' inevitably reminds us of Burke and his school (minus of course the heat and passion of polemics and the post-1789 period), Bentham's occasional sharp, short summing up and even his rhetorical flourishes sometimes remind us of Tom Paine. The point at issue on either occasion was whether the constitution was perfect and whether usage and prescription were more important than the principle of utility and the rights of man, which last two concepts had, in popular acceptance, little semantic difference.

But though there is a fundamental disagreement in theory between the Establishment and the 'utilitarian' (to use a short hand) opposition to it, in practice this disagreement was not always nor on all levels as sharp as sometimes it is made out to be.

(3)

Burke and Bentham had one thing in common. They were both utilitarians in their political economy. They were also, for somewhat different reasons, criticial of the French Revolution. Burke's hostility is well known. Bentham indeed at first thought that his projects, for which the administration at home had shown no particular zeal, would find a more congenial soil in revolutionary

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Contd. from previous page]
heaped its mould upon our presumption, and the silent tomb shall have imposed its law on our pert loquacity'. Bentham had said in the preface to the Fragment: 'Correspondent to discovery and improvement in the natural world, is reformation in the moral; if that which seems a common notion be, indeed, a true one, that in the moral world there no longer remains any matter for discovery....[Then] if there be room for making, and if there be use in publishing, discoveries in the natural world, surely there is not much less room for making, nor much less use in proposing, reformation in the moral'. op.cit., pp.93-4.

France. For a time he also seemed to have republican leanings. But the mood was short-lived. He disliked the 'delirium' and the 'passionate eloquence' of the members of the Constituent Assembly and was as critical of the French Declaration of Rights as he had been of the American.[1] It is not until the first decade of the next century that he began to be interested in parliamentary reform.

But while Burke and Bentham had their misgivings (to use an understatement so far as Burke is concerned), other utilitarians, more consistent to and more confirmed in their political economy, welcomed the French Revolution. They, with some broad-minded industrialists, saw in it the beginning of a new era of cosmopolitan brotherhood among nations, and the victory and realisation of Adam Smith's ideas.[2]

In 1789 Josiah Wedgwood, for example, refused to be swayed by those who maintained that France would now emerge as a more potent rival than before, because, freed of a despotic government, it could now apply to 'the extension of manufacture'. For his part, he said,

> I should be glad to see so near neighbours partake of the same blessing with ourselves, and indeed should rejoice to see English liberty and security spread over the face of the earth, without being over-anxious about the effects they might have upon our manufacturers or commerce, for I should be very loth to believe that an event so happy for mankind in general could be so injurious to us in particular.[3]

Paul Mantoux, who quotes the passage and to whom I primarily owe it,

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1. See E. Halévy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, 1928, pp.168-9, pp.172-7.
2. It was indeed claimed by Lord Lansdowne (Shelburne that was) in the Lords in 1793 that what were being denounced as French principles were in fact the ideas of Josiah Tucker and Adam Smith. See ibid., p.165.
3. The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood, 1965, p.318. Also see pp.319-20.

adds in a footnote, 'This sets forth the principle that the real interests of nations are fundamentally identical, which lies at the basis of the whole of Adam Smith's political economy and of Bentham's utilitarian philosophy. It is a well-known fact that English radicalism has developed out of utilitarianism'.[1]

Romilly voiced sentiments similar to those of Wedgwood when he said that 'the true interests of a nation never yet stood in opposition to the general interests of mankind, and it never can happen that philanthropy and patriotism can impose on any man inconsistent duties'.[2]

Richard Price who had himself some reputation in his day as a political economist (deserved or otherwise) preached in 1789 his famous Old Jewry Sermon. Like Romilly, he saw no contradiction between patriotism and an expansive sense of fellow-feeling with peoples of other nations. Behind the idea of universal benevolence, good neighbourliness, and peace, that permeates his sermon, as also his Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, lay that spirit of cosmopolitanism which was an important feature of Adam Smith's attack on mercantilism. It may be recalled in this connexion that one of the first acts of the French Revolution was the liquidation of monopolies and trading corporations like the East India Company, and another, a resolution not to wage wars of aggression.

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1. Paul Mantoux, The Industrial Revolution, op.cit., p.384.
2. Quoted by Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, op.cit., p.171.

(4)

Price pleaded for reform in England in the name of that very 'love of our country' which is heavily tinctured with the idea of universal benevolence. He felt concerned because English liberty was not so secure now as before. 'Increasing luxury has multiplied abuses', and divine displeasure seemed imminent. The situation was getting worse every day. 'That spirit to which [England] owes its distinctions is declining'. In a footnote he explained what he meant by these distinctions, and said that in England, because of 'the forms of an excellent constitution', necessary changes and improvements could be introduced 'without tumult or danger'. Other countries 'wanting these forms' had no choice but to make 'their escape from slavery through the dangers of anarchy'.[1]

Burke was more aware of 'the dangers of anarchy' than of the need for 'escape from slavery', but had he not been carried away, he might have agreed with the principle underlying the distinction that Price drew between conditions at home and in France. He might also have agreed with the interpretation (or aspects of it) that Price made of the spirit of 1688.

According to Price, the 1688 Settlement guaranteed three fundamental rights: 'The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters. The right to resist power when abused. And, the right to choose our own governors; and to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves'.[2] Religious toleration, he

1. Love of Our Country, op.cit., pp.46-7.
2. Ibid., p.34.

thought, was not yet complete in England.[1] He was surprised that a late application for the repeal of the Test Laws was opposed by William Pitt, whose father, the Earl of Chatham, had supported the demand for greater religious freedom.[2] Price also wanted change in the existing laws of representation.[3] But he saw no present (even future) need of cashiering the governor: the King of England was the only lawful king in the world.

(5)

Price's interpretation of the 1688 Settlement has nothing radically new or different from Henry Brooke's in The Fool of Quality. In a long digression, Henry Clinton, the merchant-prince in the novel, expresses, for the benefit of his nephew and protégé, the future Earl of Moreland, his views on civil society, laws and the British constitution. It is a confused jumble of material.[4] But a few points may usefully be summarised here.

Clinton is opposed to the 'divinely-inherent right of monarchs, implicit submission, passive obedience, non-resistance'.[5] The people, according to him, are the source and fountain of all power. They are themselves 'imaged' and 'epitomised' in the three pillars of government, the King representing their majesty, the Lords their

1. Ibid., p.35.
2. Ibid., pp.37-8. Chatham and Price had corresponded on the subject. They were both friends of Shelburne at whose place Pitt the younger was first introduced to the ideas of Adam Smith and where he borrowed Price's erroneous idea on the sinking fund.
3. Ibid., pp.39-42.
4. See Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, 1769, IV, pp.79-156.
5. Ibid., p.110.

nobility, and the Commons their legislative power. They indeed do not need to participate directly in any of the functions of the government. But they can reclaim their authority when one or all the three components of the administration fail to act by the rule of law.[1] Clinton cites evidence from the Old Testament to show that when their rights are infringed upon, the people can impeach and depose a king. He does not accept succession, in all cases, by inheritance and allows the people the right to choose their king.[2] As evidence from recent history, he refers to the events of 1688.[3] Like others he accepts the pyramidical structure[4] of the Government in England as consonant with reason and common sense and upholds the 1688 Constitution. But he also thinks of a constant ferment, a yeast, as desirable and inevitable.[5]

What Burke criticised in Richard Price's Old Jewry Sermon, then, was only the traditional Whig view of the Settlement. But a rift had been growing between the views of the Whig oligarchy and those industrialists and dissenters who called themselves Whigs too[6] but had yet to gain full religious freedom, and who, from their increasing importance in the economic life of the country, felt more and more

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1. Ibid., pp.105-7.
2. Ibid., pp.112-9.
3. Ibid., p.106. The events of The Fool of Quality come up to the last decade of the seventeenth century.
4. Brooke uses three other sets of words for King, Lords, Commons: monarchy, aristocracy, democracy; prince, peers, people; one, few, many.
5. The Fool of Quality, op.cit., pp.100-1.
6. See Burke, Reflections, op.cit., p.18.

handicapped politically. The French Revolution widened the gap.[1] An approach like Price's (or Brooke's) sanctioned (then as before and later) attempts at a radical change in society. As Bentham put it, 'what now is established was once an innovation'. Burke, the spokesman par excellence of the ruling oligarchy in the French Revolutionary period, would much rather ignore the truth contained in the remark.

(6)

Burke is not easy to define. If we take only one of his works, the Reflections (to one segment of which we will here confine ourselves), he is still elusive. Through all the verbiage of rhetoric and invective against Richard Price and the gentlemen of revolution societies, he is almost invariably on his guard. One marvels at the way he keeps his balance on a tight rope, accepting the idea of organic change and in the same breath opting for conservation and prescription. 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation'.[2] Burke cannot altogether renounce the principle of change. Yet he dogmatically supports a system established a century ago, or rather the system as it was on the eve of the French Revolution.

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1. See Joseph Priestley, Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, etc., Birmingham, 1791, p.vi. Priestley regrets that he is now obliged to class Burke among the enemies of civil and religious liberty after having long considered him one of its friends. The divergence perhaps dates back to the period of the Fox-North coalition after the end of the American war. The coalition had filled, according to Priestley, 'the Dissenters, but not the Dissenters only ... with horror.'

2. Reflections, op.cit., pp.19-20.

He argues his case against Price by a kind of double fraud. He discusses at length certain propositions in the Old Jewry Sermon and some relevant laws enacted in the reign of William and Mary and since. In each case he takes the letter and ignores the spirit. Thus he exaggerates out of all proportion the meaning and intentions of a moderate reformer like Price, and turns him into a Machiavelli or an Apostle of Liberty. At the same time, he makes the Whig settlement mean less than it probably did. Without ostensibly being guilty of distortion, he still leaves no scope for a positive moral to be drawn from the abdication of the throne by James II and its settlement on William of Orange. He accuses the 'gentlemen of the society for revolutions' of seeing 'nothing in that of 1688 but the deviation' from the mythical, ancient constitution of Britain.[1] But he is himself guilty of the opposite crime, for even when he recognises that there was a deviation, by and large he ignores it. Perhaps the gentlemen of revolution societies drew their inspiration, as Burke suggests,[2] from 1648 rather than 1688. Perhaps Burke's reading of the events of 1688-9 is historically more correct than Price's.[3] But, for Burke, to all intents and purposes, 1688 is a kind of an end-point in British history. He is willing enough to accept the view that 'all the kingdoms of Europe were, at a remote period, elective, with more or fewer limitations in the objects of choice'.[4] But now kingship, if not divinely bestowed, is certainly

1. Ibid., p.21.
2. Ibid., pp.14, 21, 62-3.
3. G.M. Trevelyan calls the 1688 Settlement 'the great conservative Revolution'. A Shortened History of England, Pelican Paperback, 1963, p.352.
4. Reflections, op.cit., p.13.

hereditary and fixed for all times. A few pages later 'so far is it from being true, that we acquired a right by the Revolution to elect our kings, that if we had possessed it before, the English nation did at that time most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves, and for all their posterity for ever'.[1] The French, he thinks, had as good a basic constitution as the British, but unfortunately for them their constitution was 'suspended before it was perfected'.[2] The implication that the British Constitution was perfected in 1688 is unmistakeable.

Burke's idea of the constitution as something organic with its 'fall, renovation, and progression'[3] (his most important contribution, some would say, to the science of politics and government) may not have been empty rhetoric. But on the whole he speaks for that oligarchy which assumed power in 1688 and now stood in the way of progress.

(7)

Burke had said in the Reflections that 'instead of casting away all our prejudices, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them'.[4] The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner echoed these sentiments. In the 'Prospectus', a statement of aims and principles, the editors avowed themselves 'partial to the

1. Ibid., p.18.
2. Ibid., p.33.
3. Ibid., pp.31-2.
4. Ibid., p.84.

COUNTRY in which we live' and 'prejudiced in favour of her Establishments, civil and religious'. They declared themselves anxious for and interested in the prosperity of 'these kingdoms' and the victory of British generals. They would admire the military valour of the British only, were old-fashioned in religion and morals, and reverenced Law, Usage and Prescription.[1]

A controversy blurs the areas of agreement, and, though it helps marshal the forces in each camp, it does not necessarily define the points of difference between the groups involved. From Burke and the anti-jacobin propaganda we can form only a vague, not very adequate, idea of what the radicals stood for. They waged war on prejudice, and were not excessively partial to their country nor did they blindly reverence Law, Usage and Prescription. In religion, moral, politics, they also made some extremely unorthodox flights of speculation. But through the haze of falsifications and distortions that inevitably took place the differences between the opposing viewpoints look bigger than they were.

The editors of the Anti-Jacobin, for example, after professing their attachment to British civil and religious establishments, go on to disclaim 'for either the ideal perfection, which modern philosophy professes to discover in the other more luminous systems which are arising on all sides of us'.[2] Now it is doubtful if, even in the early days of the French Revolution, not to speak of 1797, the English radicals extended an unqualified admiration for everything that was happening in France. Nor, with regard to the English

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1. 'Prospectus', The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner, pp.1-2. The 'Prospectus' was issued as a separate sheet before the first number of the weekly came out on 20 Nov. 1797.

2. Ibid., p.2.

constitution, as we have already partly seen, did they do more than regard it as only a little less than perfect.

(8)

British radicals had high hopes of the French Revolution. With the two greatest nations in the world living together on terms of peace and friendship, great things might be achieved for all mankind. But the hope was not as unmixed as it might seem to be or is sometimes made out to be.

Price was aware of the danger of anarchy in the proceedings of the French. With other radicals too, admiration was toned down by a note of caution. The final verdict was not infrequently held in abeyance. In her eloquent reply to Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft admitted that though the system of representation adopted by the National Assembly appeared more promising in theory, only time could show whether it 'will answer the purpose better' than the British system of representation.[1] Joseph Priestley expressed a similar sentiment when he said. 'If they [the French] succeed in establishing a free government, they will be applauded for their judgment, as well as for the spirit that they have shewn; and if they fail, they will be condemned for their precipitancy and folly.'[2] If Burke's prophetic

1. A Vindication of the Rights of Men, 1790, p.148.

2. Letters to Burke, op.cit., p.vii. For Godwin's sentiments on the French Revolution, see C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries, 1876. In 1800 Godwin recalled that though he could not refrain from conceiving sanguine hopes of a revolution of which [the writings of Rousseau, Helvitius and others] had been the precursors', he was 'far from approving all that I saw even in the commencement of the revolution.... I never for a moment ceased to disapprove of mob government and violence, and the impulses which men collected together in multitudes produce on each other', etc.(p.61). In a letter written to Sheridan, however, in April 1791, his admiration for the French Revolution shows no such equivocation as he later records in his diary (pp.75-6).

talent could exactly prognosticate (and thus to a certain extent actually bring about) disorder and chaos, Price and Wollstonecraft and Priestley were not so sure that all would be well. They did hope, and fervently too, but they also had their doubts. And hope anyway is not faith or conviction.

The hope, moreover, was not so hopelessly drunk as to develop a craving for blood. When Mary Wollstonecraft agreed with Burke that 'till we can see the remote consequences of things present, calamities must appear in the ugly form of evil, and excite our commiseration', she indeed went on to say. 'The good educing from them may be hid from mortal eye, or dimly seen; whilst sympathy compels man to feel for man, and almost restrains the hand that would amputate a limb to save the whole body.'[1] Human sympathy is in a proper balance here with the plea for constitutional surgery. But if Mary Wollstonecraft did not have as commiserating a soul as Burke who, in Paine's memorable phrase, 'pitied the plumage and forgot the dying bird', if she would not hesitate to amputate the limb to save the body, some of our novelists were hardly deficient in sympathy for the nobility of France. Mrs. Inchbald wrote a play in 1792, entitled The Massacre, dealing with the horrors of the French Revolution and Mrs. Charlotte Smith devoted one of her novels, The Banished Man (1794), to depicting the sensibility and sufferings of a French emigre.

Price in fact early disclaimed admiration for 'the riot and slaughter at Versailles' that took place on 6 October 1789. In the preface to the fourth edition of his sermon he made it plain that he

1. Rights of Men, op.cit., p.32.

had rejoiced not in those events but only in those of 14 July and the following days when 'the King of France sought the protection of the National Assembly, and, by his own desire, was conducted, amidst acclamations never before heard in France, to Paris, there to show himself to his people as the restorer of their liberty,[1] Violence of course was a serious matter. Even republicanism was not a common creed in England,[2] though the glamour of hereditary rank and distinction was beginning to lose its charm and though from sheer provocation all sorts of 'treasonable' sentiments were occasionally expressed. It may be recalled in this connexion that some of the most advanced political thinkers of the eighteenth century, including French ones, hoped for reform from above. Not being directly under the stress of a revolutionary situation, British radicals could continue and afford to be philosophical about the nature and means of the change they desired. In consequence, a constitutional monarchy in France, on the pattern of the one in Britain, would have amply satisfied most of them. The correspondence of the Revolution Society in England with the National Assembly and the jacobin clubs in France did not survive the monarchist period of the Revolution there.[3]

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1. Love of Our Country, op.cit., p.v. Emphasis mine, but I do not think Price would have objected. Tom Paine, however, in The Rights of Man, makes an extensive defence of the events at Versailles on 5-6 October. (Complete Writings, op.cit., I, pp.267-72)
2. See, in this connexion, The Life of John Thelwall, op.cit., pp.242-4. Horne Tooke 'rejoiced in the death of the King and Queen of [France], on the score of expediency'. (pp 242-3). In Thelwall's words, "He was for preserving Institutions and gibbeting the offending functionaries. He was for having kings, but for cutting off the head of one of them every fifty or one hundred years". (Quoted, p.243). Such sentiments used to annoy Tom Paine (p.243).
3. See G.S. Veitch, Genesis of Parliamentary Reform, 1913, Ch.VI, pp.126-59.

In the early days of the French Revolution it was a common English belief, as perhaps a French one too, that, as Wedgwood hoped, 'the English constitution' would, 'in all appearance', now be established in France and that she might now say 'what she never could before, that liberty is established, property assured, and the constitution fixed'.[1] Partly because of this belief, the Revolution appealed to a wide spectrum of opinion. In 1791, Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, rejoiced in 'the Emancipation of the French Nation from the Tyranny of Regal Despotism'. This emancipation, he feared, might be more apparent than real, yet he was induced to think that, whatever the outcome, French people would now enjoy the inestimable blessings of a trial by Jury, a Habeas Corpus Act and an incorrupt administration of public justice - blessings they had never so much as heard of and blessings that 'constitute the felicity of Great Britain'.[2] In matters Ecclesiastical, his professional and immediate concern, he showed even greater admiration for the decrees of the National Assembly. He made special mention of three of their achievements: 'Diminution of the immense revenues of some of the Ministers of the Church, and the Augumentation of the scanty ones of others', 'the Suppression of Monasteries', and 'Complete Toleration to all mankind in concerns of religion'.[3] Bishop Watson was a friend of toleration and an enemy of bigotry. He was in favour of moderate reform and the repeal of the Test Laws. Where the French

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1. Selected Letters, op.cit., p.318.
2. Richard Watson, A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Llandaff, June, 1791, 1792, pp.4-5.
3. Ibid., pp. 6, 7, 8.

Revolution, then, was seen to go beyond the English constitution, it was in matters on which most conscientious English people had been asking for some liberalisation.

By 1797, when the Anti-Jacobin was accusing modern philosophy of unqualified support for France and the events there, much had happened. Traces of an occasional, sporadic contact and of a partial, venial sympathy can still be found. But, like Bage's hero in Hermsprong (1796) and the retired philosopher Armytage in Charlotte Smith's The Young Philosopher (1798), most British radicals at this date would have refused to approve of the French in the lump.[1]

(9)

If France was trying to achieve more or less what Britain had already achieved, there was not only no call for emulating the French, but a pressing need to preserve the Constitution against the threat of possible subversion. Moderate reform could be of immense help in this direction. This was the time taken by quite a few advocates of reform - and it was not merely nor always a tactical line, it emanated from a sincere attachment to laws as they were.

Richard Watson, for example, accepted the need for reform but because there was danger of being misunderstood, he appealed to

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1.a) "All the malignant, as well as the bitter passions, are afloat in France; and malignant actions are the consequences. Many of the acts of the Assembly are acts of necessity; and some, no doubt, of folly". Hermsprong, 1799, I, p.85.

b) "If you mean ... that I either approve, or even did approve of the violence, cruelty, and perfidy, with which the French have polluted the cause of freedom, you are greatly mistaken; far from thinking that such measures are likely to establish liberty, and the general rights of mankind, I hold them to be exactly the means that will delay the period when rational freedom, and all that its enjoyment can give to humanity, shall be established in the world". The Young Philosopher, 1798, II, pp.15-6.

'impartial men to decide whose Attachment to the Constitution is the greatest - that of him who labours to remove such rotten parts of the glorious fabric of civil and religious freedom, as daily invite the attack of its enemies - or that of him who, not unconscious of the danger, contents himself with thinking that it will not fall in his time'. He went on,

> May the Wisdom of our Rulers, shewn as well by their Moderation in removing what is unsound, as by their firmness in retaining what is whole, preserve this mighty Edifice, the Work of Ages, and the Envy of the World, from being levelled to the ground by the rude hand of Popular Discontent, of Fanatical Zeal, of Republican Violence![1]

Thomas Erskine declared upon his honour that he joined the Friends of the People 'in hopes ...

> to tranquillise the agitated part of the public, to restore affection and respect for the legislature, so necessary to secure submission to its authority; and, by concentrating the views of all reformers to the preservation of our invaluable constitution, to prevent that fermentation of political opinion, which the French revolution had undoubtedly given rise to, from taking a republican direction in Great Britain.[2]

The logic of moderate reform as a precautionary measure against the destructive role of popular discontent would not have been quite unacceptable to Price and other 'revolutionaries'. They wanted the extension of privileges won in the seventeenth century. But they were not very willing to go beyond the framework of the established constitution. 'Reformation', Price said, is not 'innovation'.[3]

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1. Ibid., p.5n. Bishop Watson later wrote a pamphlet supporting the war efforts of the government.
2. Thomas Erskine, A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France, 1797, p.13. Also see p.20. Erskine, incidentally, had defended Paine in the government suit in 1792 but, in 1797, acted as counsel for prosecution in the case against the publisher of The Age of Reason. Tom Paine was not surprised by this change of sides by a constitutionalist lawyer. (See Complete Writings, op.cit., II, p.727.)
3. Love of Our Country, op.cit., p.50.

The Settlement was an 'assertion' and not an 'invasion of rights'.[1] Whatever these distinctions may mean, the slant is obvious. He called upon his audience to express their gratitude for the Glorious Revolution and to 'show ourselves anxious about transmitting the blessings obtained by it to our posterity, unimpaired and improved'.[2] One wonders if Burke could have really found anything to quarrel with in the above sentiments.

Price belonged to an earlier generation. But through all the distortions and the wide areas of disagreement among the reform groups, between the friends of the People at one end and the London Corresponding Society at the other, constitutionalism and the idea of moderate reform through persuasion, remained important features of the opposition platform in England in the last decade of the century.[3] Blackstone was frequently quoted in defence of those tried for treason or seditious publications. The King and Constitution

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1. Ibid., pp.34-5.
2. Ibid., p.42
3. There is no lack of evidence to illustrate the point. We will content ourselves with a few quotations from the documents of the London Corresponding Society printed in the Life of Thelwall, op. cit., as appendices. The LCS aimed at reform and affirmed that 'reason, firmness, and unanimity, are the only arms they themselves will employ, or persuade their fellow-citizens to exert, against ABUSE OF POWER'.(p.416) The society called itself and its associates 'the legal but determined advocate of British constitutional liberty, as established by the principles of the Revolution in 1688'.(p.462) The Constitution of 1688, according to them, was threatened by the late activities of the administration. (p.464) They were for equal political rights, but opposed to 'the equalization of property, or the invasion of personal rights and possessions. This levelling system they know, and all rational men must immediately perceive, to be equally unjust and impracticable'.(p.469) 'They abhor alike the FANATICAL ENTHUSIASM that would plunge in a sea of anarchy in quest of speculative theories, and the villainous hypocrisy that would destroy the very essence of existing institutions, under pretence of preserving them from distraction'. (p.470) They were, however, opposed to 'the detestable and delusive doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance', and did not abjure the use of sword in case of "dire necessity". (pp.470-1)

continued to be the toasts of even those radical groups the members of which were victims of the King and Church mobs.

As the fear of repression gained ground, constitutionalism indeed was forced upon radicals, of one variety or another, as defensive tactics. The counter-revolutionary thunder of authority that Erskine voiced the danger of while defending Tom Paine in Dec. 1792[1] had by then already spoken loud and clear. Burke in the Reflections had pointed to the possibility of Price dying the death of Hugh Peters of the Civil Wars,[2] and as early as April 1791, Godwin, in an anonymous letter to Sheridan, had anticipated an era of proscription.[3]

'The prudence', says Brailsford speaking of Godwin, 'which teaches one man to be a Whig, will make of another a Utopian'.[4] Price and Priestley had at least by implication admitted the right of the subject to active resistance of tyranny. Even Burke would allow for rebellion in extreme cases, though Priestley rightly blamed him for preaching passive obedience and non-resistance.[5] It may be arguable that Godwin's insistence on passive resistance, his reliance on the powers of the mind, his distrust of organizations and associations to fight tyranny are symptoms of a back-sliding. 'The fact', Halevy says, 'that, in 1793, the democrat Godwin preached the doctrine of non-resistance and gave up what was formerly the favourite

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1. See Halevy, Philosophic Radicalism, op.cit., p.200.
2. Op.cit., pp.63-4. See also p.81. 'We have prisons almost as strong as the Bastile, for those who dare to libel the queens of France'.
3. See C.K. Paul, William Godwin, op.cit., pp.75-6.
4. H.N. Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin and their Circle (1913), 1942, p.55.
5. See Letters to Edmund Burke, op.cit., p.viii.

thesis of the democratic party, the doctrine of the right of resistance, can be explained quite naturally by the state of political parties in England. The Republicans, in the interests of their cause, were bound to disavow the excesses of the revolutionary terror, in order to protect themselves from the excesses of the counter-revolutionary terror in England'.[1]

Perhaps the utopian idealism of Godwin and Holcroft was not entirely the product of prudence. Sincerity, for both, was a cardinal virtue, and neither can be properly called a coward. But some forms of cowardice may be more dangerous than certain types of bravado. Godwin's Political Justice was not only expensive but speculative and philosophic in the extreme: whatever long term dynamite it might (or might not) contain, the government could afford to let it alone. Holcroft was accused of high treason in 1794, but the charge was withdrawn before the trial. But Tom Paine, who had in 1792 sneaked away to France in the nick of time, most probably would not have so easily escaped the thunder of authority.

(10)

Despite the weakness, from whatever reason, of the opposition platform even in the last decade of the century, the difference between Burke's and Price's interpretation of the 1688 Settlement underlines a growing divergence of interests and opinions between the ruling oligarchy and those other Whigs who were now in a

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1. Philosophic Radicalism, op.cit., pp.199-200.

position to claim their share in the government. This divergence is perhaps nowhere as sharply indicated as by Tom Paine. He rejected altogether that century old frame of reference which had, under the threat of a counter-revolutionary jacobite restoration, kept in check the internal differences within the ranks of the Whigs.

With his American experience behind him, Paine was more likely than anybody else in Britain to show a complete irreverence for the established authority in church and state. An over-all estimate would be out of place here. But one may point out that large parts of The Rights of Man read like pure, undiluted Adam Smith.[1] Paine was opposed to charters, some of which were granted as early as the reign of William the Conqueror,[2] and to monopolies in both the economic and the political life of the country,[3] In religion, he advocated not toleration but the universal right of conscience.[4] He pointed out that while Old Sarum sent two representatives to Parliament, Manchester sent none.[5] He noted that the manufacturers of Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield were the chief manufacturers in England. 'The principal, and the generality of the inhabitants of those places', he said, 'are not of what is called in England, the Church established by Law; and they, or their fathers (for it is within a few years) withdrew from the persecution of the chartered towns, where test-laws more particularly operate, and established a

1. See Complete Writings, op.cit., pp.279-95 and, for an even more extensive and consolidated evidence of Adam Smith's influence, pp.398-454 (Rights of Man, II, Ch.V). Paine also refers to Adam Smith as somebody with far superior talents to those of Burke (p.282)
2. Ibid., pp.280-1.
3. Ibid., pp.281-2.
4. Ibid., pp.291-2.
5. Ibid., p.281.

sort of asylum for themselves, in those places'. He quoted 'one of the richest manufacturers in England' as saying, "England, sir, is not a country for a Dissenter to live in - we must go to France". 'It is chiefly the Dissenters who have carried English manufacture to the height they are now at', and, as 'the ill-effects of the test laws and church-establishment begin to be much suspected', either 'the unrepresented part of England' would get a constitution (Paine had before argued that England had no constitution at all) or perhaps the manufacturers would emigrate to France and America.[1]

Tom Paine was no constitutionalist. This is his major advantage over both Price and Burke. Price, by making the 1688 constitution mean probably more than it did, had in a way provided reasons for greater attachment to it than it deserved. Burke, by making it mean less than it probably did, became partly responsible for grave misgivings about its validity.[2] So long as the question was one of different interpretations of the 1688 Settlement, Burke was more or less on safe grounds and could easily score against his adversaries. Paine took him up on altogether different basic assumptions - the rights of man (or rather the rights of every generation to organise its own political life) and the need to abolish the 'wilderness of turnpike gates, through which [man] is to pass by tickets from one to the other'.[3] If, as Burke said, the framers of the Constitution had renounced for ever the right of

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1. Ibid., pp.293-4.
2. 'Mr. Burke has done some service, not to his cause, but to his country, by bringing [the obnoxious clauses of the 1688 Constitution] into public view'. Paine, Complete Writings, I, p.253.
3. Ibid., I, p.275.

posterity to alter the constitution and introduce innovations, then, Tom Paine could argue, so much the worse for such a constitution. His impassioned debunking of the ridiculous right of the dead over the living and yet-to-be-born is one of the best known things in The Rights of Man.[1]

(11)

The Rights of Man was avidly read. It became a kind of Chairman Mao's red-book of the working class movement in Britain as Common Sense had been of the American Revolution. Godwin and Holcroft had helped at its publication, and it was circulated by the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information, though denounced by the patrician Friends of the People. Tom Paine had done his political apprenticeship in America (which later denied him citizenship), was a citizen of the world in more than an academic sense, had helped at the birth of two republics, and did not belong to the money-making élite. He did not mince words and could be uncompromising in his attitudes. But when The Age of Reason (first part published in Paris in 1794) came out, the tide had already turned against radicals and reformists. What was an attack on institutional religion served as an additional, and effective, handle with which to curb his influence. Deism could be easily confounded with and dubbed as atheism and the religious sensibility of both anglicans and dissenters played upon.

This is not to say that radicalism as a creed was, even

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1. See Ibid., pp.251-4.

temporarily, dead and buried in the second half of the last decade of the century. A sense of frustration, an increasing recourse to subterfuges, a genuine despondency can be seen all around. In the face of all kinds of real or fancied threat, large-scale recantation, partial to complete, took place. But the worsening conditions at home, and even the increasing harshness in the tone of the spokesmen for the establishment, pushed the radical point of view further to the left and in some cases also gave it a more belligerent tone than hitherto.[1]

The war with the French, while on the one hand it strengthened the unity of big proprietors in business and agriculture,[2] on the other aggravated the grievances of industrialists and workers. Erskine pointed out that as a consequence of the French war 'many channels of our commerce [were] obstructed, and our manufacturers [were] suffering in proportion'. The heavy taxation on luxury goods was 'threatening unproduction; whilst the sinews of the laborious poor were cracking under the burdens already imposed upon all the necessaries of life'.[3] The Anti-Jacobin quarrelled with the radicals for denouncing Pitt's war as a war for tea, sugar, a feather and a

1. In the advertisement to The Rights of Nature, against the Usurpations of Establishments, etc., 1796, I, which was a reply to Burke's Letters on the Regicide Peace, John Thelwall said, 'If I have become more warm, it is because the sentiments of Mr. B. have become more atrocious'. (The unnumbered leaf carrying the advertisement is bound with the first volume, at the beginning in some cases and at the end in others).

2. See Erskine, Causes and Consequences of the French War, op.cit., p.4.

3. Ibid., p.2.

few nutmegs[1] (that is, a colonial war of the old days), and for pointing to the possibility of an economic crisis now or at the end of the war.[2]

The war then by narrowing both the foreign and the home market for manufactured goods, was already beginning to harm the interests of the industrial capitalist. Later, in the course of the Napoleonic wars, when the Orders in Council preventing trade with America caused unsold stocks to be piled up in the warehouses, the industrialist would not be so quiescent as probably he could still afford to be in the last years of the century. But already the small manufacturer, like Robert Bage, was feeling the pinch. And so was the worker. In the last couple of years of the century, Bage had three meetings of his workers to demand a rise in their wages.[3]

(12)

The labouring poor were by far the worst sufferers. The continued and rapid mechanization of industry, the failure of crops over a number of years in the last decade of the century, the difficulty in importing grains from abroad because of the war, the consequent rise in the price of provisions, the plea of 'bad times' which the mill-owner could advance as argument for not raising the wages, and then the combination acts of 1799-1800 - all joined

1. The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner, No.2, p.9.
2. Ibid., No.6, p.41.
3. BNL, op.cit., IX, p.xxii.

together to worsen the lot of the labourer, and led, if not immediately to the growth of a working-class consciousness, at least to a sharpening of the middle class conscience about the poor. Fielding, in his pamphlets, had aimed at minimising the evil effects of the growth of luxury and checking the rise of immorality among them. Strengthening the civil power and efficient workhouses were his ways of doing so. Now it was being realized that unless social conditions were changed (or at least improved), no high moral standard could be expected of the poor.

Burke, on this subject as on others, helped crystallize the radical view. One of the points which in particular aroused Mary Wollstonecraft's indignation is Burke's contempt for the poor. Throughout her reply to the Reflections there are scattered bits and pieces about, say, the way the poor can be pressed into the navy,[1] or about the arbitrary character of the game laws.[2] It is towards the end however that she takes up the subject of poverty at some length. She quotes a long passage from Burke where he says that the poor 'must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice',[3] and calls the whole idea 'contemptible hard-hearted sophistry'. 'It is possible', she goes on, 'to render the poor happier in this world, without depriving them of the consolation which you gratuitously grant them in the next'.[4]

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1. See Rights of Men, op.cit., pp.24-9.
2. See ibid., p.30.
3. Reflections, op.cit., p.241.
4. Rights of Men, op.cit., p.136.

Her attitude is perhaps one of patronizing kindness to the poor, of the enlightened employer so to speak. 'It is not by squandering alms that the poor can be relieved, or improved - it is the fostering sun of kindness, the wisdom that finds them employments, calculated to give them habits of virtue, that meliorates their condition'. 'Smiles and premiums might encourage cleanliness, industry, and emulation'. When she speaks of the poor mechanics in London, who have lost employment 'by a flux of trade or fashion', and whom 'misfortunes, not to be warded off, lead to the idleness that vitiates and renders them afterwards averse to honest labour!',[1] one may perhaps argue that her concern for the poor is actuated by a desire to keep them to the path of honest (that is, quiet, unprotesting) labour. Moreover, like most of her contemporaries, Ogilvie, Spence, Tom Paine (in Agrarian Justice - 1795-6) and a little later Charles Hall, she saw the cure of poverty in the abolition of monopoly in land. Hers was a land-based solution. 'Why cannot large estates be divided into small farms?',[2] she asked.

Despite all this, she wrote with real feeling for both the rural and the urban poor, and one cannot exactly brush aside her concern for them as narrowly motivated. On such concern for the poor, even a kind of strong partisanship with them, one of the lesser lights of the period, John Thelwall and his Rights of Nature deserve some special attention, if only because scarce enough justice seems to have been done to him.

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1. Ibid., pp.138-9 and 142.
2. Ibid., p.140.

(13)

The Rights of Nature is not a well-written, profound philosophical treatise. Its style is at times the style of political pamphleteering at its worst. In the letters, diaries, pamphlets of the period, particularly those written by members of the small artisan class, there are to be found verbal echoes and stylistic mannerisms from the works of left-wing politicians of the seventeenth-century civil wars. This is partly due to the influence of a common source book, the Bible, and partly due to an identity of more immediately shared ideals. A modern reader may find the linguistic features if not in Bunyan then certainly in Gerrard Winstanley, the digger, a bit heavy-going. To the writings of Thelwall and Hardy, among others, similar linguistic features impart, an exotic quality sometimes, but most often a distinct staleness as well.

Thelwall was a 'lecturer' and a political agitator before anything else. The title of his reply to Burke's Letters on the Regicide Peace also shows that he was very much working within the idealistic frame of his times. But his nature, he himself said, was widely different from Burke's.[1] More importantly, he showed at times an insight which could have come only from a close identification with the cause of the labouring poor. He made a distinction, for example, between the particular rights of the labourer and the general ones of mankind. He said,

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1. The Rights of Nature, op.cit., I, p.32.

> We have heard much of the rights of property and of the rights of nations, and of the rights of man we have heard some things well worth attention. Much also have we heard of the rights of peerage, the rights of Parliament, and of the rights of the crown. But let us for once inquire into the rights of the labourer.[1]

He did not think that the question of war and peace was of any great importance to the labouring man, 'for what is peace but war, to you, while ye drudge in servile misery for inadequate rewards, and your families pine in want and ignorance?'[2] Such an approach may be wrong. Thelwall nevertheless saw that a state of peace among nations is not very peaceful for those who were in any case forced to live in perpetual misery. It is the rights of this class of people that he spoke for.

Burke had argued, in his Letters on the Regicide Peace, for the concentration of political power in the hands of the leisured élite. Thelwall, instead, supported the political claims of the artificers, mechanics, workers, and manufacturers of Sheffield, Norwich, Nottingham, who, he said, were better educated and more qualified than Burke was aware of.[3] The manufacturers, however, had their drawbacks. Thelwall cited the example of a Nottingham manufacturer who had, despite his convictions, voted and canvassed for a court candidate who had interests in a banking concern with which the manufacturer had dealings. One of the workers had shown himself more independent than his employer.[4] Thelwall indeed admitted that a poor labourer who had to look after a family and ran the risk of

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1. Ibid., II, p.77.
2. Ibid., I, p.30. Also see, I, pp.50-3.
3. Ibid., p.20.
4. Ibid., p.25.

being sacked was not always a free agent. But it was a disgrace and a scandal that the majority of workers had no vote at all, and that those of them who had it were 'under coercion in the exercise of their privilege'. Even so, they had opinions and Thelwall spoke highly of the 'independent, poor voters of Norwich' whom 'no threats, no interest, no bribery can shake'.[1]

Thelwall's idea of the rights of the labourers did not stop short at pleading for the extension of franchise to them. A 'plenteous meal' he called only a 'negative blessing' and asserted the right of the labourer to 'something more than meat, drink, sleep, and clothing, in return for his productive toil'.[2] If the poor did not have leisure enough to equip themselves mentally, the fault lay not in them but in the state of the country. 'Is this government (or is it grinding and murderous oppression) which dooms the mass of mankind to incessant toil, and comfortless assiduity, and assigns the leisure, and the means of any degree of information or discussion, to a tenth-part only of the inhabitants?'[3] Thelwall saw no great difference between the 'full-crammed noxious workhouses of Britain - vile dens of tyrannic penury!' and the 'murky walls, and foul, straw-littered floors of the plantation hospital' for Negro slaves in the West Indies, between the 'feeble labourer' at home and the 'sick negroes' in the colonies.[4] He affirmed that

> every man, and every woman, and every child, ought to obtain something more, in the general distribution of the fruits of

1. Ibid., pp.27-8.
2. Ibid., p.2.
3. Ibid., p.16.
4. Ibid., p.34.

> labour, than food, and rags, and a wretched hammock, with a poor rug to cover it: and that without working twelve or fourteen hours a day, six days out of seven, from six to sixty. - They have a claim, a sacred and inviolable claim, growing out of that fundamental maxim, upon which alone all property can be supported, to some comforts and enjoyments, in addition to the necessaries of life; and to some "tolerable leisure for such discussion, and some means of such information", as may lead to an understanding of their rights; without which they can never understand their duties.[1]

Despite that qualification in favour of property and about the duties of the labourer, it is by and large the worker's claim to a better life that is being advanced here. Thelwall also saw that though a few were becoming prosperous, a large number of people were 'descending, and how rapidly, down the ladder of degradation'.[2]

Now the cure of all these evils lay not in any speculative philosophy but in social conditions themselves. 'Hume's Commonwealth', he said, 'slept for sixty years, and the Eutopia for whole centuries, on the shelves of the learned; and even the popular language of Thomas Paine would not have provoked any very alarming discussion, if the general condition of mankind had not pre-disposed them to exclaim - We are wretched! - Let us enquire the cause!'[3] The 'hideous accumulation of capital in a few hands ... carry, in their own enormity, the seeds of cure'. Out of the very conditions of modern factory work he predicted the growth of trade-unionism. Every 'large workshop and manufactory is a sort of political society, which no act of parliament can silence, and no magistrate disperse.'[4] By a collective pooling

1. Ibid., pp.18-9.
2. Ibid., p.42.
3. Ibid., pp.82-3.
4. Ibid., p.21.

of information and experience, a kind of indomitable 'Socratic spirit will necessarily grow up'.[1] The machinery of the state could curb the growth of 'opinion' among workers but temporarily, and even as it is the workers and their opinions had an extensive degree of influence, not in the Commons, but 'upon the resources of the country, upon the expense and the facility of filling the ranks of the army, and upon the spirit of enthusiasm in the day of battle' and it would not let the minister have the quiet repose of undisturbed sleep, where he kept dreaming of the collapse of the system he was trying to maintain.[2] Thelwall certainly was an optimist, but while on the one hand, the spirit of radical reform did suffer a set-back in the last decade of the century, on the other the very conditions of life were giving rise to greater determination and a greater realization of the need for change. Reform, revolution, change were synonymous for Thelwall.[3] He also called upon the administration to take warning from, and not be irritated by, the events in France and in St. Domingo.[4] He advanced to the rulers of the country the threat of 'sanguinary revolutions' to make them 'yield to temperate reforms'.[5]

The Rights of Nature is a step towards the formulation of a working class ideology and it was by no means a freak phenomenon, not a 'sport'. Paine's Agrarian Justice, the most egalitarian of

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1. Ibid., p.24.
2. Ibid., pp.28-30.
3. Ibid., p.44.
4. Ibid., p.37.
5. Ibid., p.39.

his works, came out in the winter of 1795-6. The Babeuf conspiracy took place in May 1796. Ogilvie, Spence, and a little later, Charles Hall similarly worked towards the idea of a socialist society. Thelwall saw that the conditions of society were bringing about a change in people's way of looking at its problems.

(14)

The foregoing account of the radical point of view, and its development from about the American Revolution to the end of the century tends to emphasize the weakness of the opposition platform during the period. It does not aim at comprehensiveness but, instead, relies on a somewhat detailed discussion of a few people and their opinions on certain points. It also pays more attention to some lesser known people than, say, to Godwin and Tom Paine, who are more easily accessible and who, I think, would not materially alter my total assessment of the period. Tensions of a fundamental nature were still more or less in an embryonic stage in the last years of the century - for one reason or another they also tended to be subdued.

But apart from the historical correctness of the view that, in the peculiar conditions of Britain, radicalism was less militant than, say, in France, I had also a special reason for emphasizing the limitations of British radicals. The novels which I am concerned with are in their outlook even less forward-looking than some of the pamphlets of the day. They may occasionally effect a breakthrough, both in respect of the ideas they are advancing and the technical

conventions of the novel-form. Yet, despite all their irreverence for authority, usage, prescription, law, they are mostly, even the best of them, popular works catering to a by and large not very enlightened public who were discovering in the new genre a source of cheap excitation. Almost always they follow a worn out convention. Even those novelists who had some reputation as political philosophers or agitators or pamphleteers were generally held back by these handicaps. They turned out volumes of fiction which were, if not always insipid, certainly very much less forthright than some of their other works. The artistic incompetence and the political lukewarmness of their novels were perhaps partly the index and partly the outcome of their personal lack of commitment, but perhaps also the product of that general, wide-spread lack of a positive, far-reaching radical programme in Britain. Their confusion, their lack of perspective was in a sense endemic, was not confined to them alone but was more or less typical of the period. No general deductions are intended, but in and around the chartist period, England produced far larger numbers of and far more significant social-problem novels than during the last years of the eighteenth century. Perhaps the social-political scene during this period was too much of a changing kaleidoscope for even the most sensitive vision to focus correctly on it and get the patterns right. The French Revolution, as also the indigenous developments in Britain, helped in the long run to make a clearer pattern emerge, but for the time being the colours were violently shaken, the patterns confused. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that the social-political world-view that can be deduced from these novels

is slender and highly unsatisfactory, compared, say, to what can be deduced from novels of a later day with similar intentions. The fault, I think, did not all lie in the novelists and I would have been unfair to them if I would have presented them as a bunch of weak-kneed, highly compromising individuals in a generation full of heroes. If there was a more emphatic movement for radical reform than I have been able to trace, the novelists I have discussed did not subscribe to it, at least insofar as the artistic realization of one's social awareness is a measure of one's complete, personal involvement with the situation dealt with.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE NOVEL OF DOCTRINE": A GENERAL SURVEY

(1)

In the previous chapter, in the course of our study of radicalism in eighteenth-century English history we occasionally saw that our novelists were alive to the changing temper of the day and voiced the need for reform in one respect or another. In later chapters we will attempt a detailed study of some novels and see in what way, and with what success, they interpreted the spirit of the age. But before that, a general survey, even if it involves some repetition, may be necessary. The aim is to trace the broad outline and indicate a few lines of development and enquiry. The survey will be based primarily on such novels as could not be taken up for a close analytical treatment, though, once again, the emphasis will lie on single, significant works (or situations therein) rather than on the mass of scattered comments in a mass of fiction that may for one reason or another be called doctrinal. The treatment of the novels here would necessarily be sketchy, but I have tried to remain as close as possible to what is central, in each case, to the novel as a whole.

(2)

The Fool of Quality[1] receives only a casual mention in Baker's chapter on the novel of doctrine. But we can safely take it as the first manifestation of the school in English. It bears the clear imprint of Rousseau and like his Emile and Fenelon's Telemachus it deals with, among other things, the education of a young pupil. In Henry Clinton we have also the equivalent of the mentor in Telemachus and the tutor in Emile, and like them Clinton frequently relies on moral tales or historical events or even made-up situations to help his pupil grasp some particular principle - a method that was to be extensively followed by Thomas Day in his Sandford and Merton (1783-9).

Now the connexion between the 'purely' speculative and the 'purely' practical is not only not always apparent, they may sometimes point in entirely divergent directions. Yet it may be possible, both in respect of method and content, to trace a line from Rousseau through Thomas Day and the Edgeworths to Samuel Smiles, the mid-nineteenth-century apostle and populariser of the idea of individualism. Even if such a line were tenuous, the late eighteenth-century preoccupation with education was not completely an

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1. In the next chapter we shall be discussing the novel and its ideological bases at some length. Here we will only touch upon a few points.

2. The mentor figure in eighteenth-century English fiction can by itself make an interesting study. Henry Clinton, or better still Dr. Barlow in Day's Sandford and Merton, belongs to a later period, from which numerous other examples can be cited, such as Lindsay in Bage's Man as he is (1792) and Turl in Holcroft's Hugh Trevor (1794-7). From an earlier period, Dr. Bartlett in Sir Charles Grandison and Dr. Harrison in Amelia belong to the same family. Note that Clinton, Lindsay and Turl are secular figures, unlike Drs. Bartlett, Harrison and Barlow (though Day, like Samuel Smiles later, was unpopular with sections of the Victorian reading public because of his emphasis on the secular and the almost complete neglect of the religious).

obsession with ideas and fads. Even Day's experiments on the two girls from an orphanage would not sound so absolutely crazy if we recalled Dickens' approval of Rouncewell's decision to take his future daughter-in-law from the Dedlocks and educate her his own way. The new industrialism demanded a new kind of character, and a different system of education to model the new man. The ideals of this new man were fairly well established in England before the end of the seventeenth century, but they acquired a fresh emphasis in our period. The realization of those ideals were now urgently called for. The dissenting seminaries were doing their maximum, but more was needed. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge in any case deserved severe censure. These centres of religious orthodoxy, with their old-fashioned syllabus and their ingrained loyalty to rank and authority and the manners of the aristocracy, frequently came up for indictment in the doctrinal novels of the period. To quote two examples: Mr. Clement in The Fool of Quality had been to Westminster school and to Cambridge but was utterly useless for any kind of useful employment; and a fairly large section of Holcroft's Hugh Trevor is concerned with exposing the fatuity and the intrigues of life at Oxford. Later, in Victorian fiction, the two universities would be frequently pictured as factories for turning out fops or still more vicious characters. In Thackeray's Major Pendennis we would also come across one of the earliest uses of the compound 'Oxbridge' as a term of abuse.

That the new ideas of education tie up with the needs of the time is fairly well indicated in The Fool of Quality where it is an

enlightened merchant prince who is supposed to impart to his ward the kind of education that Rousseau had prescribed. Henry Clinton is presented as a seventeenth-century figure. Though he is a beneficiary of the Cromwellian wars, his career really begins at the Restoration and ends soon after the Settlement. He has nothing of the ruggedness and militancy of Scott's Captain Bridgenorth in Peveril of the Peak, a novel of the seventeenth-century civil wars. The note of compromise on which Brooke's novel ends, one suspects, is the result of that evangelicalism for the sake of which Wesley abridged the novel, and of the cult of sensibility, the literary counterpart of religious enthusiasm. In this, if in nothing else, Henry Brooke and his Clinton are creatures of the later eighteenth-century.

But as in politics so on numerous details about the normal day to day conduct of life, the late eighteenth-century businessman had a past to draw upon. Henry Brooke, for example, is critical of the extravagance generally practised by men of rank and property. His benevolence, moreover, is heavily tinctured with prudence. The greatest act of kindness, according to him, is to find employment for the able-bodied. Charity bestowed on the undeserving is charity wasted. Neither of these - selective charity and the emphasis on the economical management of property - were peculiarly late eighteenth-century ideas, though both acquire a certain topical relevance for the advocates of progress in our period.

It is true no doubt that if the cult of sensibility was a mode of softening class antagonisms, a mode of appeasing conscience, it also involved the rejection of prudence as a guiding light. The man of feeling in our period was frequently counterposed as an

antithesis to the man of the world. Sensibility was (and perhaps is) in a real sense the cult of failure: of the disappointed lover, the aristocrat who was losing or had lost his privileges in society, the poor worker who was thrown out of home and hearth and had to work day and night to maintain his family, the sensitive middle class individual who found himself a misfit in the counting house, and above all women - 'Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?' asked Mary Wollstonecraft.[1] But with most of our 'radical' novelists unalloyed sensibility was not a viable principle. Time and again a corrective is recommended to the charitable, benevolent disposition of one character or another. S.J. Pratt is in this respect fairly representative, and at least two of his novels, Liberal Opinions (1775-7) and Shenstone Green (1779) are almost entirely devoted to pointing out the dangers of indiscriminate charity, of a much too warm and therefore vulnerable heart.

(3)

S.J. Pratt's Pupil of Pleasure (1776) enforced a similar moral, but in a somewhat different sphere. It points to the necessity of women guarding against the dangers of a vivacious spontaneity.

It is the story of Sedley, a young man who models himself after the letters of Chesterfield, and of Harriet Homespun, a silly young woman who comes to a watering place with her husband, the Rev. Horace Homespun, and is seduced by the professed pupil of

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1. The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria. A Fragment, Posthumous Works of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, ed. by William Godwin, 1798, I, p.14.

Chesterfield. Now, upper class manners had long been the subject of criticism and even lately John Brown had come out with an attack on the luxury and effeminacy of the aristocratic society of the period. His 'inestimable' Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times (1757)[1] was extremely popular and as late as the last decade of the century Burke found it necessary to criticize him.[2] But despite Burke, the need for abandoning old aristocratic values of life was widely recognized. On the simplest, the anti-duelling and anti-gambling streak that we find in the novels of Richardson and Fielding is carried on in our period, more particularly in the works of the doctrinal novelists.[3] It is in keeping with the widespread distrust of the aristocratic way of life that the polish, wit, gallantry (what Pratt and Bage, among others, would call hypocrisy) as recommended by Lord Chesterfield did not find much favour with the novelists of our school.[4] The radical protagonist is gallant in his behavior towards women, and considerate towards

1. According to H.J.Laski, Brown's Estimate is the 'first book to show the signs of change' from the era of stagnation and depravity in the earlier eighteenth century. Political Thought in England: Locke to Bentham (1920), 1955, p.113.
2. See Letters on a Regicide Peace, Works, 1803, VIII, p.85.
3. Gambling is a more persistent subject and is more consistently censured than duelling, maybe because of its more direct concern with property and its unproductive use. See in this connexion Godwin's St. Leon (1799) and Holcroft's Bryan Perdue (1805) in particular.
4. It is significant that one of the characters who is upheld as a norm and posits a contrast to Sedley is Mr. Michael Bankwell, 'an elderly, industrious, regular, batchelor of a citizen, up at eight, and in bed by eleven'. Pupil of Pleasure (1776), 1783, II p.225. While Sedley's servant, moreover, wrote books on nail-cutting, tooth-picking, etc., Bankwell's servant pored over The Whole Duty of Man, Farriery Made Easy, and The Servants' Guide.

their feelings. But he is hardly a flatterer. In his dealings with those of rank and authority, he is often rude and impolitic. Even with his equals he can hardly be accused of lack of frankness and sincerity.

The rejection of Chesterfield's set of values also meant the repudiation of refinements and the acceptance of one's 'natural' impulses. Lord Chesterfield, according to Bage, had banished laughing from the beau monde and a boor like Squire Thurl in James Wallace (1788) was, therefore, preferable to a morose, glum, serious, polished Sir Anthony. For Bage the norm is somewhere between these two extremes.[1] But the life of the aristocracy was at all event warped and stunted and a more natural life, a freer conduct than the requirements of polite society allowed for, was needed.

To go back to The Pupil of Pleasure, Sedley, like Valmont in Laclos' much celebrated novel Les Liaisons Dangereuses, which came out in 1782, only a few years later, makes it his study to seduce in cold blood unwary innocent women, married or unmarried. Pratt also hints at the idea of a female Stanhope, a female pupil of Chesterfield,[2] and though he does not work it out, the possibility of a partnership like that between Valmont and Mme. Merteuil is well indicated. One feels that there is almost everything in The Pupil of Pleasure, except, as they say, the hand of genius, that

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1. See BNL, op.cit., IX, pp.433-5 and 456.

2. See op.cit., I, pp.199-200. Sedley, incidentally, is a-sexual in his approach to women, as Valmont is. Seduction is a game which you lose if you allow your desire to be worked up. See, I, pp.115-6.

went into the making of Laclos' immortal classic. There are, however, important differences, lower down the metaphysical plane of genius. In Pratt's novel, didacticism is much too pronounced, based probably on the assumption that easy, facile answers are the best. Sedley is reformed and even the treatment of the subject shows a determined refusal to follow things through to their unmitigated implications.

What is of more particular interest to us is that Harriet Homespun, who is an Emma Bovary character, hardly gets the kind and amount of sympathy that her situation demands. Her husband is an elderly, quiet, contented clergyman whose main interest lies in the scriptures, in big philosophical tomes and in learned journals. Harriet is the (willing) victim of the superior wiles of Sedley, but she is also the victim of lack of understanding for her youthful vivacity. The husband is incapable of entering into the sentiments of the wife, - so is the wife in a way incapable of entering into the sentiments of the husband, if he had any, but liveliness is presented as far more reprehensible than complacent dullness.

Here Pratt provides us with an insight into the psychology of the novelists of our school. Dry, dull reason and warm, vivacious susceptibilities often come up in our novels as alternatives between which a choice is to be made. One of the finest studies of the subject is A Simple Story (1791) by Mrs. Inchbald where the divided loyalties of the author are symptomatic of the whole school. But with all her understanding of Miss Milner, Mrs. Inchbald finally approves of the more prim upbringing of the second Miss Milner. Bage's Hermsprong also can be cited in this connexion. Caroline

Campinet, the heroine, is faced with a conflict between the desire for self-fulfilment in union with Hermsprong whom she loves and her obligation to her father whom she must obey. To her father her attitude is somewhat like Clarissa's: he had the right to prevent her from entering into an alliance he disapproved of, but no right to impose a choice on her. This in itself is but a half-way position insofar as the daughter can never really be a free agent. In Caroline, the conflict between love and duty is resolved by a sleight of hand - Lord Grondale, the father, dies, and before his death he gives his consent to Caroline's marriage with Hermsprong. Hermsprong, the enlightened noble savage, does indeed contend that a daughter had no duties towards a father who behaved like a tyrant. Yet one of Caroline's virtues is her unshakeable loyalty to her father. Her friend and alter ego, Miss Fluart, who is a variation on Richardson's Anna Howe, is more of a positive character than the passive heroine. Yet one cannot help feeling that she receives but tawdry treatment from the author. Even if we ignored the suggestion of a flirt in her name, she remains unwooed, unwed at the end. Bage would certainly recommend what some people today would call a sterile domesticity. He would attach great importance to docility, humility, propriety as essential feminine virtues.

Our novelists do indeed show sympathy for and even resentment against the condition of women. Still the ideal woman is generally modelled after Milton's Eve. She has her place at home, it is her job to care for the creature comforts of the husband and the children. At best she can go out doling charity in the neighbour-

hood and relieving the poor in moments of crisis, as Caroline does. Here the radical heroine has much in common with the woman that Hannah More recommends for her hero in Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809).[1] In any case the woman is still only partially conceded an emotional life of her own. Elopements invariably indicate a certain shallowness in her - whatever the provocation from parents or guardians. Bage indeed does not think much of chastity. He would not mind if a woman falls - under compulsion or from some kind of (misguided) choice, if she later on undertakes a severe penance of complete self-denial. Even this was not approved of by Sir Walter Scott,[2] and Bage himself is aware of and conforms to the proprieties. Two of her sympathetic female characters effect elopement - but on both occasions the elopement is a fake. In Barham Downs (1784) Anne Whitaker, in connivance with her sister, the Anna-Howe-type in the novel, stays hidden at home, the father being alarmed under the false impression that she has run away. In Hermsprong, Caroline, on the point of being forced into an un-

1. In the opening chapter of Coelebs, Hannah More censures those who find fault with Milton's Eve whom she upholds as the model for all womankind. (See Works, 1853, VII, pp.9-14). Mary Wollstonecraft, that 'hyena in petticoats' whose Rights of Woman (1792) Hannah More refused to read, rejects Milton's idea of the perfect woman. (See Rights of Woman, Everyman's Library, 1929, pp.23-4). It should be remembered, however, that she aimed at turning out 'affectionate wives and rational mothers' (p.3) and paid 'particular attention to those in the middle class, because they appear to be in the most natural state'. (p.5). She was, as we shall see, different from most of our school on numerous counts, but, like most of them, would have agreed with Hannah More that 'it is the perfection of the character of a wife
To study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote'. (Coelebs, op.cit., p.9).

2. See BNL, op.cit., IX, pp.xxix-xxx.

wanted wedding, leaves home, but she goes to stay with her aunt, where she never sees Hermsprong except in the presence of a third party. The opinion of the world, of the world's wives, has to be cared for.

Middle class values were in fact not very lax and with the frequent insistence on virtue as the only way of achieving happiness,[1] one is not surprised, despite what moralists and the anti-jacobins might say, at the unctuous, self-righteous didacticism of our radical novelists. The ritualistic unction is performed by tears. Belief in the essential goodness of man had its immoral tendency but it also imposed obligations to be good, it imposed a sense of family responsibility and filial duty.

This is not to say that our radical novelists one and all and at all times conformed in every detail to a rigid middle class code of values. The very logic of some of their assumptions led them beyond what could be considered desirable. If chastity is not the virtue, then marriage is not necessarily a sacred institution. If nature is to be followed and marriages of love are to be preferred to marriages of convenience, then there is no reason why love should not be treated as a law unto itself. The father of Holcroft's Hugh Trevor makes a marriage of elopement with the daughter of a Rector and Holcroft kind of approves of it. At the turn of the century, perhaps as a correlate of the polarisation that had taken place in the political-economic life of the country, we find John Thelwall in his Daughter of Adoption (1801) justifying incest and

1. See, in this connexion, John Moore, Zeluco, 1789, I, p.1; and Robert Bage, Man as he is, 1796, p.viii.

pre-marital cohabitation, that is, if they are sanctioned by love. Even before that, in her Wrongs of Woman (1798), Mary Wollstonecraft approves of her married heroine's love (not merely platonic) for the hero, Henry Darnford. By that time, however, Godwin had recanted his earlier views on marriage. In any case, when most of our novelists spoke of love, they thought of it as a safeguard against the transgressions that went naturally with property marriages and against the hypocritical and shameless sex life of, say, a Lord Grondale who approved of concubinage and whose lackey of a clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Blick concurred with him and quoted precedents from the patriarchs.[1] Far from being a subversive principle, love was in fact considered necessary for a happy, cohesive family life, the most effective way of keeping the institutions intact. It was as such and not as a liberating force, not as a concession to one's natural impulses that love was accepted by our novelists. Rousseau's Julie had her appeal but her involuntary surrender to St. Preux was hardly to be emulated, except in some exceptional cases particularly towards the end of the century.

(4)

It may be arguable that Rousseau's Julie, despite her early connections with St. Preux and her final capitulation (though only emotional) to her old 'flame' is after all not the completely 'emancipated' female, that there is something very prim, something

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1. See Robert Bage, Hermsprong (1796), 1799, II, pp.6-9.

very correct about her and that her life with Wolmar is not merely a matter of convenience but actually suits her. Rousseau in any case would recommend this kind of life for a woman. One may recall in this connection that Mary Wollstonecraft did not approve of his ideas of female education.[1] Perhaps, as Thomas Mann said, Goethe's Elective Affinities (Kindred by Choice is the more fashionable, and perhaps more appropriate translation) is the finest novel of adultery (or, if you will, of extra-marital relationship) in any European language. The dual involvement in the novel no doubt ends in tragedy but one cannot help getting the impression that the tragedy is the outcome of the formidable pressure of prejudice and public opinion, and the consequent inability of the characters to follow a course of action out of the ordinary. In Rousseau, instead, the moral alternative to the Julie-St. Preux relationship is at least as meaningful and perhaps more so. But if Rousseau still posits a complex situation in that the choice is a really difficult one for Julie between Wolmar and St. Preux and for Rousseau between head and heart, so to speak, or between humdrum domesticity and the hard gem-like flame of love, Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792) which has at least a few recognisable features of Rousseau's work and deals with more or less the same subject reveals at most points a confused mind, and, what is more important, emphasizes the need for conforming to the opinions of our elders and superiors, even though they may not be right.

Holcroft's Anna is in love with Frank Henley, the educated, enlightened son of her father's steward. He has been a kind of

1. See Rights of Woman, op.cit., pp.25-6, 29-32.

and almost every mind is capable of improvement. It may be worthwhile to attempt an experiment on Clifton.[1] He is, moreover, though Anna's evidence is partial and based on hearsay or even baseless, an enlightened young member of the English upper classes.[2]

But Anna's desire to marry Clifton is not entirely the product of a disinterested benevolence, a disinterested concern for the neighbour's soul, whether it had any merit or none, but also of a servile conformity to the prejudices of the world. It is partly in order to placate the sentiments of her friends and relations that she wants to marry Clifton. 'The supposition of a duty', she says, 'too serious to be trifled with, has induced me to favour rather than repulse the too eager advances of Clifton; though this supposed duty has been but half examined'. She had her doubts about the correctness of her decision, but not very serious ones. 'No arguments', she says only a little later, 'I believe can show me that I have a right to sport with the feelings of my father, and my friends; though these feelings are founded in prejudice'.[3] As Bage's Caroline Campinet is divided between her duty to her father, Lord Grondale and her love for Hermsprong, Anna is divided between her duty to the world and its prejudices and her feelings for Frank. Like the former, her immediate response is to decide in favour of the world. She also hopes to set up as a model for her less enlightened sisters:

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1. See ibid., IV, p.216: Anna to Clifton, 'The meanest of us have our duties to fulfil, which are in proportion to our opportunities, and our power. I imagined that a duty of a high but possible nature presented itself, and called upon me for performance'.
2. See ibid., II, pp.1-17.
3. Ibid., II, pp.154-5, 155-6.

> 'Who ever saw those treated with esteem who are themselves supposed to be the slaves of passion? And could the world, possibly be persuaded that a marriage between me and the son of my father's steward could ever originate, on my part, in honourable motives?
>
> Ought I to forget the influence of example? Where is the young lady, being desirous to marry an adventurer, or one whose mind might be as mean as his origin, who would not suppose her favourite more than the equal of Frank'...[1]

The telltale phrases and words reveal Anna's psychology and possibly Holcroft's. The 'honourable motives', the 'as mean as his origin', the self-attributed superiority to herself and Frank, all suggest that Anna is more than trying to please her friends and relations, she in fact shares their sentiments.

The motive of Anna's initial choice of Clifton, then, is that she wants to reform him through marriage and that, in a way, she accepts the easy way of swimming with the current of public opinion. This prevents her from realizing her love for Frank, though she feels a fairly strong, a positive attachment to him. Early in the novel she speaks of her suspicion that Frank has cherished, with regard to her, 'some silly thoughts of an impossible nature', and she is not sure that his sentiments were not sanctioned by reason.[2] A little later she says to Frank, 'I could love you for it, if you let me.... I would say as much to the whole world, but that it is a foolish world, and wants the wit to conceive things truly as they are meant'.[3] Not long afterwards she writes to Louisa, 'I need not tell my Louisa which way affection, were it encouraged, would incline: but I will not be its slave'.[4]

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1. Ibid., I, pp.174-5.
2. Ibid., I, p.31.
3. Ibid., I, pp.158-9.
4. Ibid., II, p.155.

The Anna-Frank relationship, if only because of unjustifiable doubts on Anna's part about its 'correctness', is worked out with a measure of haunting poignancy. 'I could love you for it, if you let me' occurs in the novel every now and then as a kind of choric refrain, until it is replaced by an equally emotive remark. In the third volume there is a long dialogue between Anna and Frank on their attachment, and parts of this dialogue are written with force and feeling. The idea of 'silly thoughts of an impossible nature', of 'hopes that cannot be realized',[1] comes up once again. Frank fails to see where the impossibility lies if Anna had no objection to him:

> You confound, or rather you do not separate, two things which are very distinct; that which I think of you, and that which the world would think of me, were I to encourage hopes which you would have me indulge.
>
> Your actions, madam, shew how much and how properly you disregard the world's opinion.
>
> But I dn not disregard the effects which that opinion may have, upon the happiness of my father, my family, myself, and my husband, if ever I would marry.
>
> If truth and justice require it, madam, even all these ought to be disregarded.
>
> Indubitably.[2]

Anna impulsively kisses Frank later in the scene and Frank returns it. She vows always to love him and Frank's impassioned utterances, 'I still think, nay feel a certainty of convictions, that you act from mistaken principles', and 'To the end of time I shall persist

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1. Ibid., III, p.11.
2. Ibid., III, pp.13-14.

espousing aristocracy in Clifton, Anna thinks, she is upholding the ideals of reason. Theoretically she knows that she should do what she thinks right even though she has to oppose the wishes and opinions of her relatives. In practice, in the very name of reason she acts by 'mistaken principles', and even the impeccable Frank allows her all the justice and all the reason in the world:

> Yet let me do her justice. Mistaken though I am sure she is, the motives of her conduct are so pure that even mistake itself is lovely in her; and assumes all the energy, all the dignity of virtue. Oh what a soul is hers! Her own passions, the passions of others, when she acts and speaks, are all in subjection to principle.[1]

This confusion of motive as an adequate substitute for conduct, and even as justifying mistaken principles, more than any preoccupation with ideas as such, constitutes a serious flaw in the novel.

Anna St. Ives may indeed be taken to be a novel of growth - the growth of Anna's mind (and to a lesser degree of Frank's) from erroneous notions to correct ones. As a young girl Anna is not only light-hearted but a little light-headed as well. She is the gay miss that flutters on a pet, and on the display of fireworks. But she is reprehensible in a more serious sense, even for her mistaken principles concerning more important issues.

One of the fallacious ideas that she begins with concerns her plan to retrieve Clifton's mind through marriage. About half way through the second volume she begins to have her doubts about her mode of reforming Clifton. 'The desire to retrieve mind', she writes to Louisa, 'cannot but be right; yet the mode may be wrong'.[2]

1. Ibid., III, p.41.
2. Ibid., II, p.155.

By the end of the fifth volume, she has finally realized that she has been guilty of a great error. 'The reformation of man or woman', she says, 'by projects of marriage is a mistaken, a pernicious attempt. Instead of being an act of morality, I am persuaded it is an act of vice. Let us never cease our endeavours to reform the licentious and the depraved, but let us not marry them'.[1] Anna is probably meant to undergo a process of experience and education somewhat like Jane Austen's Emma. Holcroft is here perhaps deliberately presenting a criticism of the common fictional notion that a Tom Jones cannot be kept to the path of virtue without a Sophia.[2] Anna is after all enacting the role.

Where her growth from fallacious notions is more convincing, where this growth is also more meaningful than a mere refusal to reform Clifton through marriage, is in that she eventually marries Frank. She comes to realize in the end, though still only vaguely, that reason and passion are not necessarily contradictory principles. She sees now that her salvation lies in her choice of the 'plebeian' Frank, that is, in her acceptance of her personal emotional needs, her feelings for Frank and not in any servile conformity to the

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1. Ibid., V, p.217.

2. Holcroft himself makes some concession to the idea in his Alwyn and Hugh Trevor, and in the same year as Anna St. Ives, came out Bage's Man as he is where George Paradyne, the hero finds it impossible to overcome his shortcomings and failings except by marriage with Cornelia Colerain. John Thelwall in The Daughter of Adoption (1801) has provided an ingenious but perhaps pertinent reason for the presence of the Sophia streak, as of the love and friendship theme, in a large number of novels from our period. His hero says to a friend, "Alas!... this virtue is a slippery sort of companion. Like a debtor in the hands of the catchpole, it wants guarding upon both sides; and a friend and confidant with virtuous dispositions, of our own sex, is as essential as of the other". (II, p.299). Right reason by itself is not enough.

world's opinion. The specious arguments, the sophistry that she took recourse to in order to justify a possible union with Clifton, were not reason. Reason it seems lay in self-realization and not in self-abnegation. Whether or not the position at which Anna arrives has any absolute merit, any absolute acceptability, this is more or less the conclusion suggested by the development of Anna's career, and to say the least it is a bold conclusion, though as we shall soon see the authenticity of the conclusion is somewhat nullified by some other equally significant strands in the novel.

It is, then, as enacting a process of growth that Anna may still be said to have some interest. Even her naive project of acting Sophia and looking after the soul of Clifton has something pleasantly touching about it. One can reprove such a holier-than-thou approach and sneer at it. Yet one can equally well love her for her silly, fond notions and sympathetically view her progress from childish notions to maturity in all sorts of ways. She begins with understandable, teenage doubts about the correctness of her design to marry Clifton and with doubts about the correctness of her feelings for Frank and in each case she arrives at certainty, and her certainty on one count complements her certainty on the other.

But if one thinks of the novel as a novel of growth, one does so in spite of the novelist. Holcroft is hardly ever even mildly ironical in his attitude towards Anna. From the outset she is upheld as a paragon of virtue and understanding, as a saint that could never go wrong. In her very conformity to the prejudices of the world, she is said to uphold reason. In Wuthering Heights when

Catherine goes in for a life of ease and comfort, she excuses herself by thinking that she would help Heathcliff by doing so. But the severity with which she undergoes the rigours of her choice and the tragedy caused by her inability to see where her destiny lies, and, even at the time of the choice, the frank posing of the problem by Nelly Dean in their conversation about marriage with Linton, show up the fallacy of the choice. When Anna, instead, decides to marry Clifton, one feels that the author and the heroine are both wearing blinkers. What was a concession to prejudice and a desire for a life of comfort, is only dubiously recognized as such: by and large it is upheld as an act of reason. And it is not that Anna is deluding herself; for Holcroft approves of whatever she does.

It is only Clifton who makes any critical, ironic comment on Anna's character. This is partly inevitable in the epistolary form. Moreover, Clifton does not criticise her where she needs to be criticised. He is critical not of her conformity to prejudices, but of her very disregard, her unconcern (though partial) for them. When he tries to seduce her, he makes use of her own arguments against usage and prescription.[1] Where Clifton is critical of Anna and Frank is in the values and opinions which they both retain to the end or to which both or one of them may be said to grow. He is himself eventually brought round to some kind of agreement with them, to an acceptance of their world outlook. His criticism cannot be more than an eccentric aberration in the total pattern of the novel.

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1. See ibid., V, pp.185-198.

If Anna was always the perfect being that the author wants us to take her for, the novel surely cannot be thought of as tracing a process of growth. There is also some confusion about the position held by Frank and Anna - or, let us say, about the position to which they grow. It would seem as though they were votaries of reason and continued to be so. They are meant to uphold the thesis that mind is capable of performing all sorts of miracles. Even physical barriers cannot withstand the force of will. By a mere exertion of his mental energy the radical hero can succeed, as if it were, in surmounting all hurdles. In certain situations as when Hermsprong chastises Sir Philip Chestrum for his misdemeanour towards Misses Campinet and Fluart, or when Frank subdues, in a physical encounter, MacFane, a criminal in the pay of Clifton, one admires the valour of the 'noble savage'. But one cannot help finding it ridiculous when Frank successfully competes with a horse. The Tarzan may have come out of the pages of noble savage fiction, but is not a very satisfying, stimulating, or adult creation.

Reason, thus, is credited with immense potentialities. But as an agent of reformation and as a check to passion, where it should be far more effective than when confronted with difficulties of a physical nature, it reveals basic limitations. Speaking of the failure of her remonstrances with Clifton, Anna says at one point, 'But the fortitude to cast off old habits, and assume new, is beyond the strength of common mortals'.[1] Passions and prejudices have been

1. Ibid., III, p.83.

conceded a tenacity which makes it virtually impossible to eradicate them. 'The passions, however disturbed, are always cunning', says Anna.[1] Even Frank has to admit that 'Mind ... is slow in ridding itself of the habits of prejudices, even when prejudice itself seems to have ceased'.[2] And he knows that diehard criminals like MacFane are beyond redemption, beyond the reach of reason. And so are Edward, Anna's brother and Lord Fitz-Allen, her uncle, who are much too deeply immersed in a life of waste and luxury, of aristocratic vice generally, to listen to the call of reason and utility.[3] An exception is made in favour of some misguided, self-deluded criminals, like Pegg's nephew, who need to be saved from the clutches of law and the bloodhounds, so that they can be reformed and set off on a career of honest work. A similar exception is made in favour of Clifton. Even after his evil designs on Anna are exposed, even after he has had Anna and Frank kidnapped and imprisoned, the hope of his reformation is not abandoned.[4]

But then one wonders if Clifton's reformation is the result of his willingness to listen to the voice of reason. It is Anna's and Frank's generosity towards him, their forgiveness of him for all he tried to perpetrate on them, that brings about the final change of heart in him. It is reason that was being upheld as an alternative to passions and prejudices, and it turns out that the

1. Ibid., IV, p.147.
2. Ibid., VI, p.170.
3. See ibid., VI, pp.157-8.
4. See ibid., VI, pp.152-3, p.156 and VII, pp.50-3.

miracle is performed by the christian, religious virtue of forgiveness. Much in the doctrinal novelists of the period does in fact derive and is indistinguishable from religious prescription. Anna's persistent desire to curb her passions and act up to the best (or worst) standards of filial duty may as well have come from The Imitation of Christ.

What then seems to emerge as the valid principle is not exactly reason but something else. And reason itself is ill defined in all sorts of ways. Passions and prejudices have been lumped together as identical evils which need to be checked by reason. Yet when Anna says to Clifton, 'Do nothing which your heart does not approve, it never can be the way to forward any worthy suit',[1] the distinction between the two categories, head and heart seems to be completely blurred. Moreover, there are important qualifications to the 'categorical imperative' formulated above. First, the views and opinions or just uninhibited responses of two individuals cannot exactly tally. 'I am aware', writes Anna, 'how impossible it is that any two people should think exactly alike on any one subject, much less on all'.[2] Secondly, there is no reliable guarantee that the voice of reason would not appear at another moment as the voice of prejudice. Towards the end of the novel when it is almost settled that Anna would marry Frank, she writes to Louisa,

> I have another quarrel with myself, for having been so desirous of proving to my own conviction that the world's

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1. Ibid., III, p.164.
2. Ibid., IV, p.237.

> prejudices and the prejudices of my family ought to be respected, while that opinion accorded with my practice; and of being now so equally alert to prove the reverse. Such are the deceptions which the mind puts upon itself! For indeed I have been desirous of acting with sincerity in both instances. I can only say that I feel more certain at present; for before I had doubts and now I have none. If you suspect me to be influenced by inclination, tell me so without reserve.[1]

Sincerity is perhaps the one quality that Anna can be consistently credited with. The passage is an excellent piece of self-analysis, and a frank avowal of the subjective influencing one's judgment. And though Anna somewhat resents it, this is, as we have seen, the conclusion suggested by her marriage with Frank, which provides the most important qualification of the rationalist position.

The dual, uncomfortable co-existence of the rationalist and the romantic in Holcroft, or in Anna, clumsily, eclectically reflects the movement away from the one to the other. After Hume and his scepticism of reason it was rather difficult for anybody to take a completely, purely rationalistic stand. Rousseau also had done his bit towards weakening the battlements. He wrote, "Reason with children" was Locke's chief maxim; it is in the height of fashion at present, and I hardly think it is justified by its results; those children who have been constantly reasoned with strike me as silly'.[2] Perhaps it is the concurrence of the two opposing lines of thought which partly accounts for the combination of the rationalist and the romantic in a majority of our novelists.

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1. Ibid., VI, pp.26-7.
2. Emile, op.cit., bk.ii,p.53. One may recall that Pamela had agreed with most of Locke's observations in his Treatise on Education, though pleading occasionally for a little softening, for the sake of her little Billy, of the severities prescribed by Locke.

We can see the two jostling together in Anna St. Ives but failing to make any synthesis. We have here a series of statements running fast on the heels of a series of contradictory statements but never really catching up. In the novel as a whole we find two different lines of movement opposing rather than complimenting each other. From a failure of the experiment on Clifton, at least for a major part of the novel, we finally come to see the weakness of reason. On the other hand, Anna's final repudiation of prejudices (though, as we shall see, the nature of this repudiation is questionable) substantiates the need for a rationalist approach to life. But is it a rationalist position to which she grows? She begins with attempts at restraining her passion, her inclination, her affection for Frank - and, despite her disclaimers, she ends up by accepting them.

Anna St. Ives is the example of a good novel gone bad, so to speak. One cannot help feeling that what might have been a good novel is not so. And to say that it is ill-written and incompetent is to say no more than that it is bad. It fails it seems to me not so much because the author deals in ideas, as because he lacks clarity. The scattered observations on all sorts of subjects, on laws, on government influence, on benevolent despotism, on war and peace, on violence and vegetarianism, whether or not they have any sense in them, could be easily ignored. In the very essentials of the novel, however, Holcroft shows a complete confusion of aims and interests. The incompetence is at least partly due to a failure on the part of the author to see clearly what exactly he is trying to convey, and the result is that the book fails both as a

novel, and as a statement of doctrine.

The lack of clarity one suspects is at least in some measure the index of the author's inability to define his categories and the outcome of his reluctance to offend public sentiments. The choice for Anna, between Clifton and Frank, is surely not a difficult one. Clifton is no Wolmar while Frank is Wolmar and St. Preux rolled in one. The conflict, in any case, is resolved for her not even so much by a series of fortuitous events as by Clifton opting out. He is self-condemned: by kidnapping Anna and Frank, he proves himself unworthy of her not only in her eyes but also in the eyes of the world, her relatives. Her decision to marry Frank is not exactly a repudiation of prejudices, but still a way of conforming to them. The question is not a positive one of acting up to one's reason (or passion), but a negative one of proving one's worth to one's parents. Though marriage is the union of minds (as of persons),[1] it is as though one could not marry unless one's elders (prejudiced and old-fashioned as they may be) were brought round to accepting one's choice. One's duty to one's parents is more important than one's personal inclinations. Anna is intended as an example, - she sets out to and does prove that if we sincerely persisted in our 'duty', the world would eventually approve of us. Despite the moral suggested by Anna's final choice, dutifulness, self-discipline, self-restraint, even a respectful servility to prejudices are the positives in the novel. Holcroft would much rather like people to rely on a slow

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1. Ibid., IV, p.237.

change in public opinion than say or do anything to offend the deep-rooted customs and values of society.

(5)

The interests of Anna and her father become identical at the end of the novel. A similar identity of interests is achieved between the benevolent Frank and his money-grabbing father.

Aby Henley is the type of the perfect moloch. In him, Holcroft shows a certain intolerance of the poor but self-made man who has by virtue of his cunning and through usury risen up in the social scale. An early version of Uriah Heep that hypocritically mouths religious cant, Aby has perfectly ingratiated himself into the confidence of Arthur St. Ives, Anna's father, and has, without his knowledge, nibbled away the state. He is the type of the ruthless, grabbing individual whose sole concern and study is money. Frank is unlike his father in many respects, yet as Anna finds it difficult to quarrel with her father,[1] Frank finds it difficult to disapprove of his. Early in the novel he writes to a friend, 'Thou canst not conceive the contempt with which he treats me, for my want of cunning. He despises my sense of philanthropy, honour, and that severe probity of preferring the good of society to the good of self'.[2] But he is sad that he is obliged to speak ill of his father.[3]

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1. See, for example, ibid., pp.36-7.
2. Ibid., I, p.27.
3. Ibid., I, p.25.

Frank's benevolence has something ostentatious about it. Against a somewhat personal idiosyncrasy as with Parson Adams and Dr. Harrison, he professes a zealous creed and makes it all very sentimental. But this benevolence is not incompatible with a close and prudent economy. Aby had always considered him a fool in money matters, but by the end, somewhat mysteriously, he becomes well-disposed towards him. We do not know how he comes to see the hidden qualities of his son, but the quality that must have most attracted him is that Frank knows the value of money. About Edward, her brother, Anna writes to Louisa, 'Not to mention debts, he has too many imaginary and impatient wants to submit to delay'.[1] Nothing like this could be said of Frank and by the end of the novel Aby has become vain of his son and has also begun to see that 'there may be other good qualities beside that of getting and hoarding money'.[2] A hundred pages later it turns out that Frank after all was not a fool where money was concerned:

> His [Aby's] confidence in Frank however is now so entire that he has entrusted the transaction of certain money business to him, necessary on the present occasion, which he came up purposely to negotiate himself, but which he is now convinced can be done full as prudently and safely by his son.
>
> Not but it is from a conviction that there is no propensity in Frank to waste one of those guineas of which he is so enamoured. Without the least love of money, Frank is a rigid economist. The father indulges no false wants because it would be expensive; the son has none to indulge. Habits which in the one are the fruits of avarice, in the other are the offspring of wisdom.[3]

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1. Ibid., I, p.75.
2. Ibid., VI, p.11.
3. Ibid., VI, pp.148-150.

Surely it is better not to have any expensive wants than to be obliged to curb them, surely prudence and wisdom are more dependable (and maybe more profitable) aids to economy than avarice. If there is any difference between the father and the son, it is only that the latter is wiser and his economy is firmly based in principle. Hoarding money may have its stigma, but a proper business acumen is a valuable asset. Frank Henley is the type of the noble savage, and like Bage's Hermsprong he is the perfect economist. His propensity not to waste one of those guineas of which his father is so enamoured reminds us of the old dictum 'waste not, want not'.

(6)

If Anna St. Ives reveals a confused mind,[1] it is nevertheless the most significant, the most complex of Holcroft's novels. He wrote four in all and the idea of growth, of self-discipline and self-improvement aimed at producing more or less the ideal but rigid economist runs through all of them - but none of the others have as many intersecting planes of possible meaning as Anna St. Ives.

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1. Coleridge's well known remark on Holcroft in a letter to Southey written in Dec. 1794 comes to mind: 'There is a fierceness and dogmatism of conversation in Holcroft for which you receive little compensation either from the veracity of his information, the closeness of his reasoning, or the splendour of his language. He talks incessantly of metaphysics, of which he appears to me to know nothing, to have read nothing. He is ignorant as a scholar, and neglectful of the smaller humanities of a man'. (Letters, ed. by E.H. Coleridge, 1895, Vol. I, p.114). These are harsh words, and perhaps not quite studied, but evidently they contain some truth.

Alwyn (1780), his first novel, is an insipid reproduction of the Tom Jones theme, and the insipidity is the more marked, the more tasteless from the same story being offered twice in the same novel. It is the story of Alwyn and Hilkirk who were befriended and patronized by two rich Allworthys. When separated from their patrons à la Tom Jones, they pass through mortifications and disappointments, which, far from impairing, evidence and strengthen their intrinsic merit. In the end through the intervention of those who have in the interim benefited from and witnessed their goodness, or independently on having proved their worth and mastered their weaknesses, they are united to their espective patrons and Sophias.

But the Allworthys in Holcroft's novel, Mr. Stamford and Mr. Seldon, are not country squires but rich businessmen from London. They have their benevolent propensities as also their idiosyncrasies. In recognition of an old obligation to Alwyn Sr., Stamford offers employment to the son after the father's death.[1] Seldon adopts a girl whom at the earliest he removes from a boarding school so as to complete her education under his direct supervision and model her as a fit wife for his son, Hilkirk. Hilkirk, however, had been early cast off on the world and had to live as an orphan. The idea was to 'case-harden' him in the school of adversity.[2] Later

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1. Such benevolence did not receive much approval from Charles Kingsley. See Alton Locke, Ch.II, op.cit., p.14-5, where the kindness of Alton's rich and prosperous uncle in giving his nephew a job in his tailor's shop is viewed with marked irony.

2. 'Weak plants, you say, must be brought forward with care. The keen blast of adversity blights them, and they never come to maturity. My philosophy says otherwise; it is that very care that makes them weak, both in mind and constitution. My boy will arrive at affluence, with a mind that has withstood the shocks of misfortune; and will enjoy his independence with the more pleasure, as he is better acquainted with its value', so Mr. Seldon. (Alwyn, 1780, II, pp.144-5.)

Hugh Trevor (1794-7), is perfectible, and the improvement is to be effected by experience, that is, what one acquires through the senses, 'feeling' being one of them.[1] Some such vaguely empirical approach lies at the basis of Anna's growth from immaturity to maturity, and her design to retrieve Clifton's mind. Some such approach lies behind Seldon's (or Holcroft's) idea of 'case-hardening'.

The progress of an individual mind, that of the hero, forms one of the two themes of Hugh Trevor.[2] This rather speculative subject is frankly related to the more mundane, the more practical question of deciding the virtue and utility of different employments. 'What profession should a man of principle, who is anxiously desirous to promote individual and general happiness, choose for his son?'[3] asked Holcroft in the preface and tried to answer the question in the novel.

Holcroft's interest in the second of these subjects is subsidiary to the first, that is, the progress of human mind - and purely negative. He does not say what is the best profession for a man of principle. Instead he takes up certain vocations in turn and points out their shortcomings. In the process he rejects all of them as unsuitable. He also makes use of the opportunity to criticise numerous social institutions and evils. But through trying his hand at different professions at different times,

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1. The Adventures of Hugh Trevor (2nd ed.), 1794, I, p.v.
2. Ibid., I, p.ii.
3. Ibid., I, p.i.

through a first hand knowledge of the various institutions of society, through long dialogues with his friend and mentor, Turl, Hugh Trevor eventually arrives at the conclusion (if any conclusion can be drawn from a somewhat desultory and inconclusive novel) that a life of independence from the patronage of the rich and the powerful, a life of honest industry is the only possible life for a well-meaning, honest individual.

In Bryan Perdue (1805), his last novel, Holcroft's purpose, according to the preface, is to point out the severity of penal laws.[1] But once again, it seems to me, his primary concern in the novel, as distinct from his stated intentions (and Holcroft keeps changing his mind),[2] is to trace the growth of Bryan Perdue from a gambler to a useful member of society, the enlightened, benevolent manager of a West Indian plantation. He recounts his experience for the benefit of 'simple and honest youth' - in order to warn them of 'the dangers that beset them', 'by pointing out to them the snares, traps and pitfalls in which I have been caught'. He recalls his 'days of riot when the boisterous pleasures of the senses drive, full gallop, and overset prudence, wisdom, and virtue, maiming them all'. He once 'had those giddy, light-minded, and even rash propensities in which vice and folly delight'.[3] Now grown virtuous and sagacious, the gambler that was preaches from the pinnacle of sainthood sermons of caution and self-control.

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1. Memoirs of Bryan Perdue, 1805, p.iii.
2. See, for example, ibid., I, p.4 and II, pp.134-5.
3. Ibid., I, pp.4-5.

But Bryan Perdue, it seems, was never wholly depraved, and in his character the process of turning the essential, potential goodness of heart into something definite and concrete has been delineated. Towards the end of the first volume, Henry Fairman, one of Bryan's school friends, gives him a long lecture, exhorting him to change his ways.[1] He acknowledges Bryan's 'great goodness of heart'. But the lecture ends with "Pray be good, Bryan! Pray, pray, be good!" Henry finally bursts into tears and can proceed no further.[2] The hysterical call to virtue is repeated every now and then in the course of the long harangue, and one cannot really brush it aside as a childish outburst. For Bryan Perdue's career illustrates the process of becoming unquestionably good from being essentially good. The first is an active principle, the second a passive one.

From early in life Bryan meets two contradictory forces pulling him in opposite directions. One is the passion for gaming, for easy money, that he acquires from his father, a gambler too. With this goes all that is vicious in life. On the other side, there is the pull towards goodness. This conflict is externalized, in the beginning, in the opposing dispositions of his father and his governor. At a later stage, at school, it is embodied in the two sets of friends or admirers that he had. Bryan Perdue consorted with Maximilian Lord Forth and his gang, only occasionally did he meet a group of three whom he envied but generally kept away from.

1. See ibid., I, pp.248-50.
2. Ibid.,I,p.250.

Their leader, Henry Fairman, jr., is the son of an opulent London merchant whose celebrity compares favourably with the European fame and connections of Henry Clinton in The Fool of Quality, or Sidonia in Coningsby, or John Thornton in North and South. Fairman, the father, is 'honorably known not only on the Royal Exchange of London, which is itself no little praise, but familiar by name through the great fairs, marts, and emporiums of the known world; and such men when they are truly honorable, are a blessing to the world'.[1] By the end of the novel, Bryan has become good and moved away from the world of Maximilian Lord Forth to that of the honourable merchants.

Holcroft knows that not all merchants are honourable. There are some black sheep among them. After numerous misconducts, accompanied by the inevitable goodness of heart and some necessary manifestation of it, Bryan is at one stage appointed as clerk in the firm of Mr. Hazard, who represents all that is bad in the world of commerce. The pervasive subject of gambling in the novel is partly meant as an allegory of the speculation on the Stock Exchange. 'I have had occasion', says Bryan, 'to speak much of gamblers, but it cannot escape the acute reader that commerce itself, in the hands of men like Hazard, is gambling by wholesale'.[2] At the very beginning of the novel, Holcroft makes a scurrilous allusion to some Mr. Cheatall who became Lord More Money, and some Sir Henry Empty who was now Earl Goldstick[3] - types both, it seems, of that self-seeking

1. Ibid., I, p.143.
2. Ibid., II, p.121.
3. Ibid., I, p.5.

race of merchants who bought boroughs and titles and engaged in the factional politics of the court and who were fast getting in disrepute with those who were versed in the ethics of utilitarianism. Against these contemptible, reptile specimens of the business community, Holcroft upholds the independent-minded Fairmans who believe in honesty and integrity. Henry's uncle, himself a merchant, gives a long lecture to Bryan on the need of honesty, particularly in a city like London where so much depended on business contracts.[1]

During his employment with Hazard, Bryan continues to frequent the billiards room and imbibes some other vices as well. His character and predicament touch the lowest depths when he is (falsely) imprisoned for forgery. Out of this scrape, he emerges as pure, solid gold, and ends his career as the successful manager of a West Indian plantation, where by his humane treatment of the slaves, he achieves efficiency and productivity.

Holcroft then is trying to work out a norm for the good apprentice and for the benevolent merchant, the conscientous capitalist, who should not be a speculator like Mr. Hazard, but a benevolent person who gives employment to the deserving poor and charity to the disabled, provides better living conditions for his workers and slaves, that is, generally performing acts of utility

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1. "In this vast, multitudinous, mercantile city, where such a prodigious exchange of money and effects is daily taking place and so many hundred thousand pounds are transmitted from hand to hand by persons intrusted, by public officers, merchants' and bankers' clerks, nay by poor and common porters, it being not possible for the owners themselves to do all this, what safety, what general sense of repose can there be, for this heterogeneous swarming multitude, but that one thing, on which we all depend, you, I, our friends, our wives, our children, what but honesty?", ibid., II, p.169.

and public good.

(8)

Perhaps there is an element of idealization in the kind of benevolent businessman that occurs in quite a number of our novels. But faith in the possibility of amelioration through the agency of a well-meaning, honourable, enlightened businessman was common in the late eighteenth century. His efforts, however, ran the risk of being jeopardized by the ignorance of the illiterate vulgar folk, as is evidenced by the failure of St. Leon's plans 'to relieve and assist, to the utmost of [his] power, the inhabitants of [Hungary] in the extremity of their distress'.[1]

Godwin's St. Leon is a wandering jew character. He had the secret of the philosopher's stone and of eternal life. When in the course of his travels, he reached Buda, the capital of Hungary, he saw all around him signs of complete desolation following a period of long war. The only effective expedient that he could think of to help the people was to revive the spirit of industry. He could make money and gold enough, but echoing Adam Smith he points out their insufficiency. Money, he says, is not wealth. It could be neither eaten nor drunk, and 'it was unable, but by a circuitous operation to increase the quantity of provisions or commodities that the country afforded'.[2] Therefore, instead of

1. William Godwin, Travels of St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (1799), 1831, p.372.
2. Ibid., p.372.

distributing gold, he embarked upon a project of building houses for the peasant and the cultivator. 'While I employed labourers', he says, 'and paid them their wages, there would be, in the mildest and most salutary mode, a continual influx of money into the market'.[1] He also assisted other men 'by pretended loans', to employ labourers, though in pursuance of the spirit of non-interference and laissez-faire, he let them 'act upon their own designs, and prosecute their own fortunes'. He helped the poor man, the widow, and the orphan. 'I was cautious and apprehensive as to the direct dispensing of money, but not entirely bent against it; I regarded it as a precarious, but in some cases a necessary interference'.[2] As a result of all these benevolent acts, a miracle was performed. The country prospered: 'the sound of the hammer, the saw, and the various tools of the workman, was to be heard from every side'.[3]

But this prosperity was short-lived: the period of boom was followed by depression. Even as the consequence of more money in the market, of what we call inflation, prices rose, and soon there was not enough provision for everybody to buy. This crisis was by no means impossible to ride over. What was needed was frugality and fortitude for a short period. 'But fortitude is not the virtue of a populace'. 'As long as every thing went on prosperously, they were grateful; the moment a reverse occurred, they were

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1. Ibid., p.373. See in this connexion, Robert Bage, Mount Henneth, BNL, op.cit., IX, p.136. Bage here approves even of unproductive labour if it is meant to give employment and thus relieve the misery of the poor.
2. Op.cit., pp.374-5.
3. Ibid., p.375.

political economy. His account of the scanty provisions in the shops and the wretchedness and disappointments of those who could not buy them is unquestionably written with feeling and a sense of realism. He also sees that all hopes of achieving a utopia through the benevolence of the enlightened businessman are just so many delusions: the fervent faith and idealism of Political Justice has given place to that despondence which was not very uncommon in the last years of the century. Yet his sympathies here are with the industrialist and the mill-owner and not the ordinary man in the street.

(9)

With a strong belief in the culture and importance of the élite, in enlightenment generally, most of the radical novelists not unexpectedly showed at one time or another a certain distrust of the rabble. Faced by the vulgarity and violence of the masses, and the 'craft, dissimulation, corruption' that went with commerce (in the generic sense), they sometimes also looked back with a measure of nostalgia to the past, to the age of chivalry,[1] and preferred the aristocratic patronage and encouragement of culture

1. Ibid., p.26. Also see Mary Wollstonecraft, Wrongs of Women, op.cit., I, p.59 where she speaks with approval of 'the cultivation of the fine arts, or literature' and 'that polish of manners which renders the rich so essentially superior to the poor in Europe'; and John Thelwall, The Daughter of Adoption (1801), I, pp.308-9, where Henry, the hero, says to a friend, "You may rail as you will against the vices of nobility rather than those of merchants and planters! the polished licentiousness of a gay European metropolis before the pigstye voluptuousness of this semi-barbarism and ignorance [of the West Indian planters]... but what, except the groans of Africa, have we to set against the swill-tub prodigality, and brothel-house revelry, that constitute the unvaried circle of Creolean amusements?"

to both the ostentation of the middle class and the lack of fortitude in the common people. St. Leon apart, even in Caleb Williams, we notice this nostalgia for the past. Godwin's ambivalence towards Falkland is partly the expression of admiration for the culture and refinement of the enlightened country squire. J.T. Boulton has argued that Falkland is a complex recreation of Burke.[1] We can avoid a detailed discussion of Caleb Williams if only because it is easily available and has been more often written about than any other novel of the school. But it certainly points to a duality in Godwin. Falkland has an old-fashioned sense of honour, which leads him to one act of violence after another. First he murders Tyrrel, the embodiment of the most barbarous, boorish, unrefined tyranny. So far so good, but later, he connives at the legal murder of the Hawkinses and persecutes Caleb in all sorts of ways. By showing that violence generates violence, Godwin is reiterating his belief in reason and persuasion and unequivocal sincerity as the only dependable means of eradicating evil. The novel may indeed be read, like Mary Barton, as a complex study of the problem of violence. What is of greater importance to us here is that Falkland's sense of honour, his love of poetry and the kind of poetry (on chivalry) he writes, are all admired by Godwin.[2]

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1. See J.T. Boulton, The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke, 1963, pp.226-32.

2. Holcroft's attitude to Clifton in Anna St. Ives, or to Wakefield-Belmont in Hugh Trevor, is probably the manifestation of a similar ambivalence as Godwin's. Wakefield-Belmont is a more sharply delineated character, and realized with much greater symapthy than Clifton. He has something of Rameau's nephew/[Contd. on next page

For all the ambivalence of Godwin, and his squeamishness on certain points, the novel achieves at least some of its effect because it has been largely written from the point of view of the plebeian hero, and Caleb is a plebeian in a more real sense than Holcroft's Frank Henley. In Political Justice and elsewhere Godwin seems to be acutely aware of the problem of poverty and the way the poor are hedged in on all sides. It is an insight like this that probably accounts for the greater realism of Caleb Williams. It is no less 'idealistic' than, say, Anna St. Ives. When Caleb, for example, is imprisoned, he is said to be capable, through a mere exertion of his mental powers, of setting at defiance his persecutors.[1] Yet the vividness and feeling with which life in the prison or life of the hunted is evoked is something unparalleled in the radical novels of the period.

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nephew in him, his views are subversive and anarchic in the extreme. There is, thus, another aspect of Hugh's (and Holcroft's) dual, love-hate relationship with his step-father. Like the philosophical robber in Caleb Williams, Wakefield-Belmont can receive but a half-hearted, partial approval from his author.

1. See, for example, Caleb Williams, op.cit., pp.203, 205, 206: 'My fortitude revived.... my mind whispered to me the propriety of showing, in this forlorn condition, that I was superior to all my persecutors. Blessed state of innocence and self-approbation! The sunshine of conscious integrity pierced through all the barriers of my cell, and spoke ten thousand times more joy to my heart, than the accumulated splendours of nature and art can communicate to the slaves of vice'. 'I reflected with exaltation upon the degree in which man is independent of the smiles and frowns of fortune'. 'Adamant and steel have a ductility like water, to a mind sufficiently bold and contemplative. The mind is master of itself; and is endowed with powers that might enable it to laugh at the tyrant's vigilance'. Prison-life after all is not very uncomfortable if the discomforts thereof can so easily be set at nought.

(10)

The doctrinal novel of the late eighteenth century, as we have said before, was not entirely concerned with ideas and fads; even these in any case had a relevance to and grew out of the concrete situations of the period. But the fluid psychology of the industrial bourgeoisie and the uncertainty of conditions gave birth to all sorts of idealistic panaceas. As the social scene began to crystallize, however, as people came face to face, so to speak, with the positive evils of capitalist industrialization, a sense of realism, a more definite preoccupation with the actual condition of the day to day life of the ordinary people, began to replace the earlier utopian, idealistic concerns.

In Caleb Williams we see the two trends co-existing together in a somewhat balanced proportion. But stray instances of a serious concern, as against a patronizing or sentimental one, for the condition of the common people can be cited from a fairly large number of novels written in the last decade of the century. In Desmond (1792), a novel of a young man's love (largely Platonic) for a married woman, Mrs. Charlotte Smith, for example, describes at length, at one point (in a footnote though) the condition of the poor in England:

> The English have a custom of arrogantly boasting of the fortunate situation of the common people in England. But let those, who, with an opportunity of observation, have ever had an enquiring eye and a feeling heart on this subject, say whether this pride is well founded. At the present prices of the requisites of mere existence, a labourer, with a wife and four or five children, who has only his labour to depend upon, can taste nothing but bread, and not always a sufficiency of that. Too certain it is, that (to say nothing of the

> miseries of the London poor, too evident to everyone who passes through the streets) there are many, very many parts of the country, where the labourer has not a subsistence even when in constant work, and where, in cases of sickness, his condition is deplorable indeed -... Yet we are always affecting to talk of the misery and beggary of the French. - And now impute that misery, though we well know it existed before, to the revolution.[1]

Charlotte Smith was as much full of 'sensibility' and 'enlightenment' as any other novelist of the period. But 'the present prices of the requisites of mere existence', 'a labourer with a wife and four or five children', the insufficiency even of bread - all this shows a departure from the abstract language and phraseology of sensibility and/or enlightenment.

The concern for the poor was not always confined to a few stray passages (and another one from Charlotte Smith herself can be cited[2]) or a few stray episodes. Despite his preoccupation with intellectual growth, Holcroft in his Hugh Trevor shows some sustained interest in the common ordeals of those of the plebeian stock who have neither the power of purse behind them nor reliable patronage.

After the death of his father, a prosperous farmer, Hugh lives in utter misery and wretchedness, working for a time as a farm boy under a cruel master. Fortunately, he saves the life of his grandfather, on the mother's side, and is acknowledged by him. His career then takes a turn for the better. In the careers of Turl and Wilmot the author once again describes the privations (or

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1. Charlotte Smith, Desmond, 1792, I, p.112.
2. See The Young Philosopher, 1798, IV, p.199.

rather the deprivations) of an ambitious young man of talent and without means. Wilmot also writes a poem about the poor. It begins with

> Ho! Why dost thou shiver and shake,
> Gaffer-Gray

and ends with

> My keg is but low I confess,
> Gaffer-Gray.
> What then? While it lasts man will live.
> The poor man alone,
> When he hears the poor moan,
> Of his morsel a morsel will give,
> Well-a-day.[1]

As late as 1858 a historian of the novel referred to the poem as 'that beautiful ballad... which has been chanted in every roadside of all England, along which wretchedness has passed'.[2] The idea behind the poem is a common one. Old Gaffer-Gray is refused help and charity by a priest, a lawyer and a squire, but the poor man shares his scanty provision with him. Even the anti-jacobin would resent the refusal of charity to the poor, though he would impute such callousness, such hard-heartedness not to the priest, or the lawyer, or the squire but to the radical philosopher. There is, however, this difference that instead of being held responsible for his condition and being accused of having spent the wages of his labour on drink, old Gaffer Gray in Holcroft's poem is in fact told to 'warm thy old heart with a glass'. Whatever else may be said

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1. Hugh Trevor, op.cit., III, pp.139-40.
2. J.C. Jeaffreson, Novels and Novelists, I, p.304.

against such an attitude, there is nothing of the patronizing, temperance-society morality about it.[1]

In the course of our detailed analysis of Nature and Art, where the problem of poverty forms the chief concern of Mrs.Inchbald, we shall be looking more closely at some of the ways in which the subject was treated. We have already seen that Mary Wollstonecraft, in her Rights of Men, had passionately asserted that the condition of the poor can be improved in this life. We have also seen that in his Rights of Nature, published in 1796, the same year as Nature and Art, John Thelwall fervently advocated the cause of the labourer and upheld his rights to more than a mere minimum of basic needs.

(11)

John Thelwall saw that the lot of the labourer in England was no better than that of the Negro slave in the West Indies. He took up the latter of these subjects in his only novel The Daughter of Adoption.

Like most novels of the period, The Daughter of Adoption is open to the charge of being excessively sentimental, and, as even the title may suggest, it eventually degenerates into a typical tangle of lost identities and misunderstood situations. But it sets out to deal with the slave rebellion in St. Domingo and also

1. See, in this connexion, the parody of Southey's 'The Widow' (1796)(The Minor Poems, 1815, I, pp.169-70) in The Anti-Jacobin, op.cit., No.2, p.15. A satire on the lack of charity in the professed friend of humanity, it imputes the wretchedness of the knife-grinder to a drunken brawl in a public house.

achieves a measure of success in articulating the dilemma of the young radical of his period. Henry Montfort, a young man of sensibility, is sent to the West Indies to look after his father's property. What he sees there of the dehumanisation of slaves and the callous treatment meted out to them, draws from him the exclamation, "But what is there ... of fair and beautiful in this magnificent structure of the universe that commercial rapacity will not deform?"[1]

Henry, with his friend Edmunds, who had been active in England and France in the agitation for slave emancipation, is faced with a serious dilemma when the insurrection of the Negroes breaks out. Moved by the carnage practised by the rebels and forced by their unique position of being but European sympathisers, they temporarily though reluctantly side with the planters and exchange fire with the Negroes. Emotionally they are on the opposite side. Their dilemma is the dilemma of the liberal intellectual who just cannot or would not take sides - a dilemma that Graham Greene in our time has tried to grapple with in his Quiet American. Linked with this is the question whether to approve of the violence resorted to by the insurrectionary Negroes (or the unprivileged generally). Thelwall's Henry and Edmunds find it impossible to side with the slaves. They show the same distrust of violence as Godwin. Unable to resolve the conflict, they take the easy way out and leave the islands for England. Here onwards, as symptomatic of their decision to escape rather than face the facts, the novel deteriorates into a sequence of improbable situations.

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1. Op.cit., I, p.268.

In the anti-slavery works of the period one frequently comes across the idea of a superior race trying to wean tenderly (and not with whips) the barbarous Negro from a state of ignorance, illiteracy, obstinacy, and reluctance to work. The literary Negro was no doubt very often a highly idealized character.[1] But as often (and sometimes conjointly with the idealization) one meets a patronizing, benevolent, paternalistic attitude towards them. The suggestion that even the Negro was capable of humane sentiments is always there and frequently the moral that by proper management he could be turned to greater profit than by cruel treatment. Defoe's Colonel Jacque, during the period of his overseership and then the ownership of a plantation in Virginia, exemplifies this moral. From our period, Maria Edgeworth's 'The Grateful Negro' can be cited as the purest expression of similar sentiments, though in John Moore's Zeluco[2] and Holcroft's Bryan Perdue[3] the approach is not very diff~~icult~~erent.

John Thelwall, despite the understandable inability of his protagonists to take sides, is sharply aware of the injustice done to the slaves. What Seraphina says on the subject is final: "The atrocities of the revolted slaves, can never reconcile me to the tyranny that made them so atrocious!"[4] Though Thelwall does

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1. See Wylie Sypher, Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the XVIIIth Century, Chapel Hill, 1942.
2. See op.cit., I, pp.156-7.
3. See op.cit., III, pp.213-38.
4. Op.cit., II, p.124.

not quite approve of the indiscriminate atrocity, as he would say, practised by the slaves, Henry and Edmunds, if they could, would have gone over to the other side. The Negro servant of Mr. Parkinson, the retired 'philosophical hermit', is one of the leaders of the insurrection, and Thelwall approves of him not only for his kind and humane gestures towards his kind and humane master but also for his active participation in the cause of his community.

(12)

Thelwall could approve of, could enter into the feelings and sentiments of those organising and leading a revolt. He seems to have been all for revolutions,[1] as few of his contemporaries were. On certain aspects of the condition of women in society, or rather on the question of man-woman relationship, he is similarly more forthright than most others of our school. He takes up the subject in Seraphina's story.

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1. We have already seen that reform, revolution, change were synonymous for Thelwall (See above p. 77) In his Sober Reflections on the Seditious and Inflammatory Letter of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke to a Noble Lord, 1796, p.56, Thelwall has the following to say on the subject of revolutions: 'there are revolutions against liberty, as well as revolutions for it: revolutions made by governors against the people, as well as revolutions made by the people against the government. The latter of these have always, I believe, proceeded from necessity; been actuated, in the first instance, by right principles; and been productive of ultimate good. The former have as uniformly resulted from the ambition, rapacity, and tyranny of wicked counsellors, and have been productive of oppression and misery, and generally of ultimate revolt! These revolutions are, in reality, the causes, and the justifications of the other'.

Seraphina is the daughter of the supposed father of Henry Montfort, who spent a gay, lecherous life when he was in the West Indies. Early abandoned first by the father and then the mother, she is eventually adopted by Mr. Parkinson and is trained by him into all that a heroine should be. She meets Henry and falls in love with him. When her foster father is killed in the insurrection, she is left with no expedient but to go to England with Henry, her sole protector now. She has, however, no heir-portion to match with the eventual inheritance of Henry. As may be expected, she is conscientious enough to refuse to marry him, because she cannot let him forego his fortune (which would be the necessary consequence of their marriage) to live ever after a life of indigence. But like 'another Eloisa, she despised all security but the bond of love',[1] and she has no objection to living and sleeping with him. Not all of it may be logical or consistent, but only after Henry is disinherited, does she agree to marry him. He would become 'the laborious husband of a laborious wife, and maintain the independency of himself and his little ones by parsimonious abstinence and inglorious toil'.[2]

Most of our novelists at one time or another seem to think that honest labour and parsimonious living are guarantee enough against starvation and for a happy life. And with most of them it turns out that by some kind of a deux ex machina the need for

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1. Op.cit., III, p.59. We may recall here that S.J. Pratt had been critical of Harriet Homespun who had read New Eloisa and used to quote, "Curse on all laws but those which Love hath made". (Pupil of Pleasure, op.cit., I, p.132)
2. Op.cit., IV, pp.77-8.

work and economy is obviated. In The Daughter of Adoption Seraphina is acknowledged by her father and everything ends well - in marriage and happiness. The suspicion of an incestuous relationship between the loving couple is removed by the disclosure (or invention) of a separate parentage for Henry.

Despite all the contortions of plot, however, the Eloise figure is unreservedly upheld. Pre-marital cohabitation is approved of and so is incest.[1] If Henry and Seraphina love each other, whatever comes in their way is to be viewed and rejected as the prejudices of the world. Such an attitude one suspects could not have been easily endorsed by Holcroft.[2]

But if Thelwall shows a measure of realism, of genuine feeling in his treatment of the slaves on the West Indian plantations, in

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1. Dr. Pengarron, a crotchety old doctor, who bears a close family resemblance with Dr. Gordon in Bage's Mount Henneth and who like Gordon brings everybody together by occasionally playing the detective as well, says to Percival Montfort, Seraphina's father, that the cohabitation of Henry and Seraphina "has been regulated by such principles of Platonism [which is a lie], as such debauched and vitiated old rascals as you and I have been, can scarcely comprehend", ibid., IV, p.154. Love, (even) on moral grounds, is a more viable principle than unhappy marriages and the resulting promiscuity. Dr. Pengarron, who is certainly a spokesman for the author, justifies incest too. (See ibid., IV, pp.188-93).

2. Both Holcroft and Bage, in somewhat different ways, are critical of Wertherism. See Bryan Perdue, op.cit., III, pp.8-9: "For a man to say there is but one woman who is worthy of me, there is but one with whom I can be happy, or there is not another one on earth possessed of so many perfections, is to be guilty of an absurd supposition with respect to himself, and to commit flagrant injustice on the female sex". Compare with this Robert Bage, Man as he is (1792), 1796, pp.196-7: 'For what author, not disordered in intellect, and at liberty to choose his ways and means, would, in the reign of George the Third, feign a young English gentleman of birth and affluence, in love - that is to say - in love with one; and that to so strange a degree as to impair health; nay - to become enamoured of death'. Bage seems to attach some importance to single attachments, but he is not in complete sympathy with Sir George Paradyne's decision to let himself go under because of disappointment in love.

Seraphina's story he is concerned one feels with somewhat peripheral and extraneous issues, if only because, unlike in Mary Wollstonecraft's Wrongs of Woman, the apotheosis of love is largely unrelated to the position of women in society, and the miserable existence, in all sorts of ways, that is forced upon them. Consequently, after Henry's departure for England, the novel loses its tone and timber, it becomes flaccid so to speak. Towards the end, when Seraphina is kidnapped and from a dungeon finds herself suddenly descended on a patch of damp elevation surrounded by water on all sides, she exclaims,

> Isolated! Isolated! - I am still but isolated!
> I have been, from my cradle upwards, a solitary being standing on a little island of my own, with a dark prospect bounded all around, save only where the flood of my misfortunes come pouring in.[1]

Some kind of a symbolism for the isolation and helplessness of the woman seems to be intended here. Yet the language has a false ring. Thelwall, for that matter, is never very restrained in his use of words. But the West Indian scenes in the novel, the evocation of the misery of the slaves, even the dilemma of Henry and Edmunds have more of sincerity about them, they are less of a fake than Seraphina's account of her situation. Her life with the Parkinsons in any case had been all that anybody could desire.

(13)

On the condition of women, Mary Wollstonecraft has a more

1. Op.cit., IV, p.20.

cogent case to argue, and her Wrongs of Woman or Maria (1798), a posthumous work, has far more of significance to say than Thelwall and his Daughter of Adoption, though her novel appeared some years earlier.

Maria, the heroine in Mary Wollstonecraft is helpless and isolated in a far more real sense than Thelwall's Seraphina. After having to put up with all sorts of inhumanity from her husband, a debauchee and calculator, who has always his eye on whatever property his wife had or whatever she could get from her benevolent, kind-hearted, rich uncle, she runs away from home, and, like Godwin's Caleb Williams, is hunted from one place to another, 'like an infected beast'.[1] She is finally entered into a madhouse, which in this case serves as an objective correlative, if we may use the phrase, for the woman's helpless isolation in society. She meets Henry Darnford who too has been forcibly put there by relatives who wanted his property, and falls in love with him while lawfully wedded to somebody else. They make love while still there,[2] and live together when they are able to come out. The husband brings a charge of adultery and seduction against Darnford, who has had to leave for France. In his absence, Maria makes the defence, and admits, on his behalf, of the charge of adultery but not of seduction.

Now Mary Wollstonecraft is not exactly against the marriage state. Maria's uncle, and benefactor (whose death makes her even more vulnerable than before) says, 'The marriage state is certainly

1. Op.cit., II, p.99.
2. Ibid., II, p.127.

that in which women, generally speaking, can be most useful'.[1] Later on Maria herself asks, 'How does the woman deserve to be characterized, who marries one man, with a heart and imagination devoted to another?'[2] Mary Wollstonecraft is, like others of our school, highly critical of the lax morals of those to whom wedlock provides but a screen for the satiation of reprehensible desires, and would like a marriage to be based on secure foundations like the identity of hearts and imaginations. But her approval of the marriage state, even at the best, is conditional.[3] Society as it is constituted would not let people live without any security except the bond of love.[4] Even so, she goes on to make a serious indictment of prudery in women:

> When novelists or moralists praise as a virtue, a woman's coldness of constitution and want of passion; and make her yield to the ardour of her lover out of sheer compassion, or to promote a frigid plan of future comfort, I am disgusted. They may be good women in the ordinary acceptation of the phrase, and do no harm; but they appear to me not to have 'finely fashioned nerves', which render the senses exquisite. They may possess tenderness; but they want the fire of imagination, which produces <u>active</u> sensibility, and <u>positive</u> virtue.[5]

Maria amply exhibits these qualities of '<u>active</u> sensibility, and <u>positive</u> virtue' in both her response to Darnford and her bold rejection of the charge of seduction brought against him.

Mary Wollstonecraft's forthright conclusions, unlike those of Thelwall on the same subject, are authenticated by her realistic

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1. <u>Ibid</u>., I, p.40.
2. <u>Ibid</u>., II, p.30.
3. See <u>ibid</u>., II, pp.141-2.
4. Maria knows her <u>New Eloisa</u>. See, <u>ibid</u>., I, pp.40-3.
5. <u>Ibid</u>., II, pp.29-30. Also see, I, p.60.

presentation of the dominance of man over woman and the attendant evils of the marriage state. Maria's condition at home is not only the result of one petty tyranny piled over another but is based in and arises out of the legal property rights that the husband had over the possessions and earnings of his wife. Even side episodes point to the injustice of a law under which the woman sweated and then yielded her earnings to the husband. While moving from one lodging to another, Maria meets a landlady whose husband had long abandoned her but turned up every now and then to claim the earnings of her honest and hard labour.[1] At the end of her story, the landlady cynically observes that 'women have always the worst of it, when law is to decide' and also advises Maria to return home.[2]

It is the personal involvement of Mary Wollstonecraft, her commitment to the cause of women, her sense of the actual, that makes her Wrongs of Woman far more eloquent, far more outspoken than the treatment of the same subject by other novelists of our school.

(14)

Mary Wollstonecraft was as acutely aware of the rights and wrongs of men as of the rights and wrongs of women. Despite (or rather because of) her immediate, personal involvement with the

1. Ibid., II, pp.96-9. See, in this context, E.S. Turner, Roads to Ruin, The Shocking History of Social Reform (1950), Penguin Paperback, 1966, Ch.6, pp.135-156.

2. Op.cit., II, p.99.

cause of women, she could look at it as inseparable from the cause of the poor and destitute in general. In the preface to her Wrongs of Woman, she speaks in the opening sentence of both the wrongs of women and 'the wrongs of the oppressed part of mankind'.[1] Whatever linguistic incompetence this may indicate (for 'the oppressed part of mankind' should by itself include, generally speaking, women), some of Maria's misfortunes or of the women she comes across are indistinguishable from those of any human being, male or female, with similar handicaps. The story of Jemima, the madhouse assistant who befriends Maria, brings out the point particularly clearly. At one point in her story, while speaking of the difficulty in finding work, she says, "How often have I heard ... in conversation, and read in books, that every person willing to work may find employment?" She calls it "the vague assertion ... of insensible indolence", though she goes on to point out that for women the situation is worse than for men.[2] Her experience leads her to think of the rich and the poor as "natural enemies".[3]

Mary Wollstonecraft also shows that an awareness of the problem of poverty, depending upon the extent and quality of one's sympathy and involvement, lead to a distrust of idealistic, sloppy solutions. Henry Darnford, the hero in The Wrongs of Woman does indeed suggest that a change of heart in the rich is needed to improve the lot of the poor, who need a kind smile from their

1. Ibid., I, no pagination.
2. Ibid., I, p.112.
3. Ibid., I, p.122.

superiors even more than charity.[1] Yet Jemima questions the claim of "writers professing to be friends to freedom and the improvement of morals" that "poverty is no evil", and Maria agrees with her.[2] One recalls in this connexion that Holcroft thought of adversity as the best school for the formation of character.[3] Some other universally accepted 'radical' myths of the period have been questioned in the novel. Once in a state of dire need Jemima appealed, for help, to an old acquaintance, who was an advocate of 'unequivocal sincerity'. She received in reply a long essay on 'the energy of the human mind'. No material assistance came but the advice to 'exert her powers', misery after all is 'the consequence of indolence'.[4] The shaft of Mary Wollstonecraft's satire is here unmistakeably levelled against the proponents of the new philosophy for their want of charity. Jemima and her author, one suspects, would not have entirely disapproved of some of the sentiments contained in 'The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder'. This is of course not to say that Mary Wollstonecraft was one with the conservatives. But while our radical novelists were setting up and upholding, in many respects, norms for a

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1. Ibid., I, p.125.
2. Ibid., I, pp.112-3.
3. By the middle of the nineteenth century a definite change of attitude on this subject had taken place. Ruskin in The Political Economy of Art (1857) spoke of 'the just and wholesome contempt in which we hold poverty' and considered it to be one of the most notable characteristics of the age he lived in as compared to other ages. (Unto this Last and Other Essays, Everyman's Library, 1907, p.1) Thirty years later Mark Rutherford ironically spoke of the worker's infirmary as the sixth form of the school of adversity. (The Revolution in Tanner's Lane (1887), OUP, 1936, p.133.)
4. Op.cit., I, p.111.

capitalist society, and hoping for amelioration through the agency of an industrial élite, some of them, at least towards the end of the century, getting disillusioned. They were beginning to despair of the perfectibility of human mind and society, of the efficacy of ideas like 'universal benevolence' and 'the energy of the human mind', of idealistic panaceas generally.[1]

Side by side with this development, this distrust of, say, 'unequivocal sincerity' as a meaningful proposition, went a certain hardening of attitude towards the established authority. John Thelwall provides an interesting study in this respect, and so does Mary Wollstonecraft. She resents the passivity of her heroine. Talking of her husband's dogged pursuit of herself, Maria admits of her own fault insofar as he was misled by her dislike of resistance and goes on to say that it was her pride 'which made me imagine that I could bear what I dreaded to inflict; and it was often easier to suffer, than to see the sufferings of others'.[2]

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1. A symptom of this distrust can be seen in the differences between Thelwall and Godwin. In his Sober Reflections, op.cit., Thelwall listed Godwin among his enemies, with Powises and Windhams, Scotts and Mitfords, Burkes and Reeveses, and added a footnote: 'It is painful to see such a name, in such a list. But if men of great powers, however sincerely attached to liberty, voluntarily, by cold abstractions and retirement, cherish a feebleness of spirit, which shrinks from the creations of its own fancy, and a solitary vanity, which regards everything vice, and mischief, and inflammation, but what accords with its own most singular speculations ... they must expect to be classed with other calumniators. The bitterest of my enemies has never used me so ill as this friend has done'. (p.105) The 'cold abstractions', the 'feebleness of spirit', the 'singular speculations' point to more than a personal difference. Godwin certainly would have felt only a distant sympathy with Thelwall's plea for revolutions. (See ibid., p.56). On the significance of the quarrel between Godwin and Thelwall, see C. Cestre, John Thelwall, A Pioneer of Democracy in England, 1906, pp.133-9 in particular.

2. Op.cit., II, p.101.

This is just another aspect of a growing scepticism of idealistic solutions and shows an attempt at reconsidering education, persuasion, compassion as effective means of change. Here is a groping towards a more hard-hitting approach than abstractions allow for and it proceeds, perhaps, from an increased awareness of the actual implications of those abstractions in the social context of the period, from an awareness not only of the limitations of the ideals themselves but also from an awareness of their connexion with the practical aims and ambitions of a class whose interests were in direct opposition to those of the labouring poor.

The kind of reaction that we find in Mary Wollstonecraft is indeed not a question of a few individuals being ahead of their times: even the best of them were not, and even the worst may occasionally manifest a kind of staggering consciousness. Most often, a sincere attachment to idealistic solutions and a realistic approach involving the rejection of what may be characterized as the cherished ideals of our radicals would be found co-existing together. Under the pressure of changing conditions, the ideological fads and fallacies of the period were beginning either to undergo a subtle transmutation or to be abandoned entirely. The problems of society required a fresh and different approach. We have seen how, by 1799 (when St. Leon came out), Godwin had despaired of the possibility of amelioration through the universal benevolence of the enlightened industrialist. In his Fleetwood (1805), the commercial-industrial utopia has already acquired, in its very achievements, a lurid, sickening glow. His account of child labour in the silk-mills of Lyons is perhaps

the last flicker of 'genius', of sympathy and fellow-feeling with the underprivileged. The bitter irony with which he makes his bloated capitalist vaunt of his success in modelling to perfection the character and life of young innocents can compare with the best passage of social criticism in Victorian fiction:

> You cannot think ... what an advantage these mills are to the city of Lyons. In other places children are a burthen to their poor parents; they have to support them, till they are twelve or fourteen years of age, before they can do the least thing for their own maintenance: here the case is entirely otherwise. In other places they run ragged and wild about the streets: no such thing is to be seen at Lyons. In short, our town is a perfect paradise. We are able to take them at four years of age, and in some cases sooner. Their little fingers, as soon as they have well learned the use of them, are employed for the relief of their parents, who have brought them up from the breast. They learn no bad habits; but are quiet, and orderly, and attentive, and industrious. What a prospect for their future lives! God himself must approve and bless a race who are thus early prepared to be of use to themselves and others. Among us it is scarcely possible there should be such a thing as poverty. We have no such thing as idleness, or lewdness, or riot, or drunkenness, or debauchery of any sort. Let the day of judgment come when it will, it will never surprise us in a situation in which we should be ashamed to be found.[1]

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1. Fleetwood: or, the New Man of Feeling, 1805, I, pp.239-40. Robert Southey who reviewed the novel in the Annual Register, IV, 1805, pp.649-50, echoes Godwin's sentiments in his Letters from England (1807), ed. by Jack Simmons, 1951, pp.207-8. His guide speaks with the same pride as Godwin's silk-manufacturer from Lyons of 'the infinite good' which had resulted from employing children in the great cotton manufacturies of Manchester. He says, 'In most parts of England poor children are a burthen to their parents and to the parish; here the parish, which would else have to support them, is rid of all expense; they get their bread almost as soon as they can run about, and by the time they are seven or eight years old bring in money. There is no idleness among us: - they come at five in the morning; we allow them half an hour for breakfast, and an hour for dinner; they leave work at six, and another set relieves them for the night; the wheels never stand still'. Southey adds that 'if Dante had peopled one of his hells with children, here was a scene worthy to have supplied him with new images of torture'.

Bounderby's Coketown has scarcely anything much better to boast of.

It should be remembered, however, that what in particular caught the fancy of at least one enlightened contemporary reader of Fleetwood, that is, Shelley, was not the realistic portrayal of conditions in Lyons, but the seductive charm of natural beauty in Wales and Switzerland.[1] And the fault is not all Shelley's. For whatever else it may be about, Fleetwood is certainly not about factory-workers or child-labour.[2]

(15)

Though individuals may falter, as Godwin did, the history of the Victorian social-problem novel may well be described, on one plane, as showing a movement away from Falkland to closer identification with Caleb Williams. This movement of course does not trace a simple, linear graph. It is riddled with all sorts of confusions. Primarily a reaction against the spirit of utility

1. Shelley wrote to Godwin on 4 April 1812: "I had pictured to my fancy that I should first meet you and your wife and children in a spot like that in which Fleetwood met Ruffigny, that then every lesson of your wisdom might become associated in my mind with the form of nature where she sports in the simplicity of her loveliness and magnificence, and each become imperishable together". Shelley had also looked for a cottage in Merionethshire, the scene of Fleetwood's childhood. (Ford K. Brown, The Life of William Godwin, 1926, p.264). One thinks that the young enthusiast would have been specially attracted by such passages as the following: 'Often have I climbed the misty mountain's top, to hail the first beams of the orb of day, or to watch his refulgent glories as he sunk beneath the western ocean'. (Fleetwood, op.cit., I, p.3)

2. Godwin, as he acknowledges in the preface to Fleetwood, had always been interested in the miraculous and the impressive (op.cit., I, v-vi), the influence perhaps of Burke's The Sublime and the Beautiful. When he decided, as he says, to narrate such adventures 'as for the most part have occurred to at least one half of the Englishmen now existing', he did not know how 'to weave a catastrophe' except by recourse to the extraordinary (pp. vii-viii).

and the age of improvement, the Victorian social conscience got lost in all sorts of obscurantist lanes and by-lanes - Young England, hero-worship, Oxford Movement, Christian Socialism, minority culture. A detailed discussion of these developments would be out of place here. But in many respects these developments, and the weakness as well as the strength of the social-problem novel of the later nineteenth century, are anticipated by the radical novelists of the late eighteenth century. Belief in the efficacy of persuasion and change of heart, distrust of trade-unionism and organized working-class movement, advocacy of fellow-feeling and understanding between the employer and the employee or the upper and lower classes generally (reflected partly in the inter-class marriages, say, in Hugh Trevor, Coningsby, North and South), continue to delimit the vision of most Victorian novelists dealing with social problems. We may also recall that the rapacity of those engaged in commercial and business (in a generic sense) enterprises sent Mary Wollstonecraft, Godwin, Thelwall off at a tangent into occasionally speaking well of the nobility and the past - thus ante-dating one of the elements in the Young England movement. But, as we have already seen, the radical novels from towards the end of the century, despite all their confusions, evidence a growing sense of commitment to the cause of the labouring poor, and this process continues apace in the nineteenth century. Whatever the motive and whatever the limitations of the remedies advanced, it is difficult to brush aside the persistent theme of poverty in the Victorian novel as a mere sop to conscience.

This duality - a kind of pull, only more vigorous than in the later eighteenth century, between the tendency to rebel and the desire to compromise - remains unresolved in most Victorian novels and is also reflected on the psychological plane. Corresponding to the polarisation in the economic-political life of the country that took place towards the end of the eighteenth century, there also took place at the same time a certain repudiation of the rigid, puritanical, bourgeois morality based, say, in prudery and delicacy. This conflict between the desire on the one hand for self-improvement through self-discipline and the cognizance and avowal on the other of vital springs of emotions is something we come across every now and then in the Victorian period.

The repudiation of constraint is in a sense revolutionary. But it also indicates the presence of a desire to escape into irresponsible, and perhaps therefore pleasurable and soothing, modes of life. This, as much as some other tendencies carried over from the past, led to an enervation of the will to rebel. Thelwall for one shows how the cult of natural beauty could induce a mood which was both insurrectionary and sedative. In The Daughter of Adoption, Henry and Edmunds, who had one night wandered into the midst of nature, exchange the following remarks:

> "What a scene, and what an hour, Edmunds", said he bantering, "to hatch treason in!"
>
> "What a scene, and what an hour, sir," replied Edmunds, with the most undisturbed composure, "to make one forget that treason was ever necessary in the world!"[1]

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1. Op.cit., I, p.283.

This conversation is based on one that actually took place when Thelwall visited Wordsworth and Coleridge at Alfoxden, Somersetshire, in July 1797. Both poets recalled it many years afterwards. Coleridge's account is closer to Thelwall's: '"Citizen John", I said to him, "this is a fine place to talk treason in!" "Nay! Citizen Samuel", replied he, "it is rather a place to make a man forget that there is any necessity for treason".'[1] Wordsworth's memory transmuted this into the following: '"This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world." - "Nay", said Thelwall, "to make one forget them altogether".'[2] Each version is highly characteristic of its teller, but all insinuate the seductive appeal of withdrawal from the stresses of a society badly in need of a revolution. Treason and jarrings are pleasant enough to contemplate from a place of retirement, but woe betide the man who is ill-advised enough to go out into the dust and heat of the world. Hence the nature-mysticism of Wordsworth, the opium dreams of Coleridge, and the conservatism of both. Hence, too, in the later nineteenth-century novel, the strained denouements in Canada or Egypt or Australia, reconciling one to the essentially irreconcileable, bringing to the final pages happiness, sunshine, comfort, even a blaze of glory. The long-lost uncle, in one form or another, invariably turns up.

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1. Table Talk, ed. T. Ashe, 1884, p.103.
2. Poetical Works, ed. by E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1940, I, p.363.

P A R T T W O

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOOL OF QUALITY AND THE ECONOMIC MOTIF

I

Introduction

The long lost uncle in The Fool of Quality is a merchant-prince. His nephew is not exactly a layabout that had to be rescued from moral depravity and/or material deprivation, to be set up on the path of virtue, utility, happiness. He is the younger son of an Earl whose estate and title he finally inherits. From having lived away from home in his childhood, he had also imbibed the 'right' principles, of fellow-feeling with the ordinary people and contempt for the glitter of aristocratic life. The uncle is meant to further the child's education by fostering the attitudes already acquired and by providing protection and insulation against the possible influence of upper class prejudices. But he is important in his own right, as one of the two protagonists. To the Earl's decadent and wasteful way of life, he offers the alternative of a chastened and successful life of economic enterprise. Together with the future Earl, he also assumes and acts the paternalistic role of the benevolent merchant helping the worthy to be useful members of society.

Henry Brooke (1703? - 1783), a petty Irish landlord who spent (without much achievement) a lot of money on the improvement of his land and on new methods of agriculture, wrote The Fool of Quality

when he was past sixty.[1] In 1739 he had written a tragedy, Gustavus Vasa, the Deliverer of his Country, one of the first plays to suffer under the notorious Licensing Act of 1738. The character of Trollio, the Machiavellian adviser of Cristiern, King of Denmark and Norway and usurper of Sweden, contained allusions to Walpole, on whom Brooke also wrote a skit. The play, however, was published, with the Prince of Wales on the list of subscribers. Later it was also staged in Dublin as The Patriot, a more meaningful title in the political context of the day. Bolingbroke's The Idea of a Patriot King had appeared in 1738 and Brooke echoed him when he said in the preface to Gustavus Vasa that the ideal monarch should be 'as the FATHER of a large and well regulated family; his subjects are not servants, but sons'.[2]

But Brooke was no Tory. Neither his opposition to Walpole nor his loyalty to the idea of a 'patriot king' seems to have been actuated exactly by the spirit of faction.[3] He no doubt retained a measure of paternalism in his political beliefs and in

1. The Fool of Quality, projected into four volumes, came out in five, between 1766 and 1770. A second edition of the first two volumes, which appeared in 1766, was published next year, before the publication of the third volume in 1768. The references, unless otherwise stated, are to the 1767 edition (most probably a reprint) of the first two volumes and the first edition of the last three.

2. A Collection of the Pieces formerly published, 1778, II, p.134. See, for Bolingbroke, The Eighteenth Century: 1715-1815, ed. by George Rude, New York 1965, p.36.

3. When Chesterfield was made Governor of Ireland in 1745, Brooke was appointed barrack-master of Mullingan (or some other place) with a salary worth a clear £400 a year. But he soon came out with an expose in The Secret History and Memoirs of the Barracks of Ireland. The quixotic strain of which we find evidence in both Henry Clinton and his nephew, Harry, seems to have been present in Brooke himself.

his general approach to society. But by the time he wrote The Fool of Quality, he had most certainly renounced his faith in the possibility of any permanent benefit accruing from benevolent kingship. Henry Clinton, the uncle in the novel, says to one Sir William Thornhill, that he would never wish to see his nephew, Harry, on the throne of Britain.

> I should be [he says] jealous of such a person, in behalf of my country. No people could be more tenacious of their liberties than the Swedes, till Gustavus the son of Eric ascended the throne. His manners were so amiable, his virtues so conspicuous, his government so just, and he made so popular an use of all his powers, that his subjects thought they could never commit enough into his hands. But what was the consequence? His successors made his power a precedent for their own, without attending to the precedent of his administration.[1]

When Brooke wrote these lines, George III had already been on the throne some years, the centre of corruption and factionalism. Brooke's Henry Clinton predicts from towards the close of the previous century that in future the British Constitution might be reduced to some form of Asiatic despotism:

> the time may come when, even in Britain, a minister may arise who shall have the art and address to bribe and corrupt a majority of their constituents. He will thereby be enabled to take the lead at the head of the representatives of the nation; when all shall follow him in implicit and orderly procession, each duly and decently attending the posteriors of him who immediately precedes in the arrangement.[2]

Perhaps Brooke is still mainly thinking of Walpole, the first prime minister, but his observations are equally true of political

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1. The Fool of Quality, op.cit., IV, p.215.
2. Ibid., IV, p.104. The lines emphasized (by the author) bring to mind The Adventures of an Atom (ascribed to Smollett and published in the same year - 1769 - as the fourth volume of The Fool of Quality) where the ritual of 'attending the posteriors' is constantly (and with greater gusto than Brooke could think of) practised at Court.

corruption and bribery after the accession of George III to the throne of England. It is highly unlikely that Brooke, though living at the time in virtual retirement in Ireland, knew nothing of political life in London in the seventeen-sixties. The Fool of Quality is dedicated to the author's 'antient and well beloved PATRON', the public, and though there is an uncertain tone of sarcasm in the dedication, Chatham is acknowledged as 'the patron of my patron' and the public is left free to 'dedicate statues, temples, monuments as lasting as the benefits conferr'd'.[1]

Brooke's approach in The Fool of Quality is more markedly democratic than in Gustavus Vasa. He talked in the later work of the equal rights of the poor and the rich. While explaining to his nephew the key principles of the British Constitution, Henry Clinton says,

> One man may abound in strength, authority, possessions; but no man may have greater right than another. The beggar has as much right to his cloak and his scrip, as the king to his ermines and crown-lands.[2]

Such a concept of rights based in property is not seriously questioned until the close of the century. It nevertheless shows that questions about the 'fundamental' rights of man, of the rights he had in his person and property,[3] began to receive some marked attention in the reign of George III.

With his fear of Asiatic despotism replacing the time-honoured democratic institutions of Britain, Brooke called upon his public to

1. Op.cit., I, pp.iii, iv.
2. Ibid., IV, p.99.
3. See ibid., IV, p.99.

imbibe the spartan virtues, to give up the life of dissipation and waste, and learn to live one of temperance, even of poverty.[1] In both his insistence on democracy and on temperate living, he shows the influence of Rousseau. But his approach seems as much to be the product of his response, though from a distance, to conditions as they were in Britain. Far from being a freak, The Fool of Quality marks the growth of a Whig mind from the 'thirties of the century to the 'sixties - the crystallization of the opposition to Walpole into a positive platform. It also shows in an eclectic way the impact and development of a multiplicity of other factors in British life itself. Brooke started his literary career with Universal Beauty, A Philosophical Poem (1735-6), written in the manner of Pope and perhaps also retouched by him. It is said to be the inspiration behind Erasmus Darwin's Botanic Garden (1795). More important, it is saturated with the deism of Shaftesbury, who exercised a lot of influence on Rousseau. One may legitimately argue that the democratic strain in The Fool of Quality is but the logical extension of the 'essential goodness' principle. Brooke's, however, was not a philosophic mind, it was more a repository of attitudes from various sources. The religious element in the novel, for example, is a curious cocktail of deism, evangelicalism, and mysticism.[2]

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1. See ibid., I, 'Dedication'.

2. The Gentleman's Magazine, 1778, XLVIII, p.376, called the novel a 'Rhapsody of Sense and Nonsense, alias Behemenism'. The Critical Review, 1770, XXX, p. 459 noted that the author appeared 'religious even to madness'. The Monthly Review, 1768, XXXIX, p.411/[Contd. on next page

Despite his eclecticism, despite digressions and irrelevant episodes, Brooke's novel has in its central development a pertinent economic thesis to advance. Its chief concern is to underline the superiority of the mercantile community over the landed aristocracy. Brooke, as he belonged to an older generation, supports monopolies and corporations and the policy of Protection. But in many respects his views are close to those of Adam Smith. He marks the transition from the vigorous imperialism of the Seven Years' War period to the American Independence and the ideas of free trade.

Contd. from previous page]
p.411, said that 'the religious sentiments and pious expressions' in the novel may 'savour too much of William Law, or the methodists'. It disapproved of the frequent appearance of 'the doctrines of justification, satisfaction, etc., etc.' and of 'such devout expressions as the Son of David, Babe of Bethlehem'. Later, 1770, XLII, p.330, it said that the novel was 'bewildered with enthusiasm, and over-run with the visionary jargon of fanaticism' and recommended an abridgement. Wesley did in fact abridge the novel in 1780. But he omitted 'a great part of the mystic divinity, as it is more philosophical than scriptural'. (Preface, The History of Henry Earl of Moreland, abridged by John Wesley, Halifax [1870], p.vi). Wesley also left out the remarks on feudal government but, curiously, retained Vindex, the school-master, of whose spare-the-rod-spare-the-child philosophy, Brooke is severely critical.

II

Summary

(1)

The Story of the First Generation

The Fool of Quality is, in the main, the story of two generations of the Moreland family. The story of the first generation begins in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Richard, the then head of the family, had been ennobled by James the First. He had two sons, Richard and Henry Clinton, born seven years apart. On the death of the father, in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, the elder brother inherited the title and the estate with an annual income of near twenty thousand pounds. Henry's total heir-portion was twelve thousand, and seven years after the death of their father he was bound apprentice to 'a considerable London merchant.'[1] The elder brother meanwhile went on the grand tour of Europe.

Richard, the Earl, was always "beset with sycophants and deceivers of all sorts", because he had been born "to a title and a vast estate". From his infancy he had been trained "to unavoidable prejudices, errors, and false estimates of every thing".[2] On his return from Europe, he had enquired about Henry, but hearing that he was lately married, and 'wholly absorbed in matters of merchandise', he took no further interest in him. He had the

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1. The Fool of Quality, op.cit., I, p.40.

2. Ibid., I, p.99.

a happy home life, with a growing family. But this private happiness did not last long. One after another all his dear ones, first the children, then his wife and finally his father-in-law, expired. Clinton was for long inconsolable, but his business responsibilities finally called him away from his personal grief. In the course of his business trips to the Continent, he met, and eventually married, Louisa D'Aubigny of the French blood-royal, who, incidentally, had been from her earliest years "the beloved disciple of the celebrated Madame Guyon".[1] A daughter, Eloisa, and a son, Richard, named after the uncle, the Earl, were the product of this union. Living a happy life once again, Henry Clinton frequently passed between England and the Continent. In the course of one of his short stays in London, he joined "his fellows in trade in a petition to his Majesty for the restoration of some of the lapsed rights of their Corporation".[2]

This was the period of the Earl's intimacy with the King, and "the ministers of his pleasures and policy".[3] The delegation waited on him to solicit his intervention on their behalf. Henry was the head of the delegation and the chief spokesman. In deference to his brother's gentlemanly appearance and dignified airs, the Earl, though he did not recognize him, was prepared to help him. But Henry was claiming rights based on justice and utility, he was not asking for any "unmerited complaisance".[4] He

1. Ibid., V, p.195.
2. Ibid., V, p.196.
3. Ibid., I, p.100.
4. Ibid., I, p.101.

was as proud of his calling ("I am but a trader, a citizen of the lower order",[1] he says without any shame in belonging to the lower order.) as the Earl was of his rank. He was in fact doing the Earl a brotherly favour by giving him a chance, before anybody else, to gain the credit of what the merchants could have got, and soon get, without anybody's intervention on their behalf. He says,

> The venerable body now present, might be admitted to a tete a tete with the first estate of this kingdom, without any condescension on the part of majesty. And, would you allow yourself to be duly informed, I should soon make you sensible that we have actually done you the honour which we intended by this visit.[2]

The Earl was piqued by such presumption, and refused to do anything about the demand of the merchants, because "we give little to sturdy beggars, but nothing to saucy rivals".[3] The sense of rivalry between two opposing classes, one not yet completely beaten, the other confident and assertive, is the obvious point of confrontation between the brothers.

Henry's last words at the interview were, "When courtiers ... acquire common sense, and lords shall have learned to behave themselves like gentlemen, I may do such a one the honour to acknowledge him for a brother".[4] By the end of the novel, the Earl will have seen reason and light, will have recognized the importance of trade and commerce. He will then be acknowledged by Henry. Meanwhile, the brothers continue to live their separate

1. Ibid., I, p.101.
2. Ibid., I, p.103.
3. Ibid., I, p.108.
4. Ibid., I, p.108.

lives.

Henry's parting words brought to the Earl a sudden flash of recognition, but false pride restrained him from acknowledging the arrogant leader of the merchants as his brother. The demands were nevertheless conceded. Henry was also received by the King in full levée and held 'in long and familiar conversation', and 'all the court was profuse of their admiration and praises' of him[1] which further mortified the Earl, who for a long time after took no interest in him.

In course of time, in advanced age, still older 'in constitution than years,' he thought of 'providing an heir to his estate; and, as he had taken vast pains to impair it, he married a citizen's daughter who wanted a title, and with her got a portion of one hundred thousand pounds, which was equally wanting on his part.'[2] After marriage, he retired from 'the glare and bustle of the world,' and went to live in the country, where within a year Richard, the elder of his two sons, was born. Domestic felicity then revived the memory of his brother, but his efforts to find him were all fruitless.

Henry's happiness, meanwhile, had once again been short-lived.[3] Louisa died a sudden, premature death; and so did Dicky, the son.

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1. Ibid., I, p.110.
2. Ibid., I, p.41.
3. The contrast in personal fortunes is puzzling. According to Tawney, one of the marks of God's favour and bounty was the accumulation of wealth which the industrious has managed to acquire during his lifetime by his own efforts. One would expect this to be carried over into domestic life and the text, when translated, becomes transposed into crowds of happy children and healthy mothers. Henry however suffers personal misfortune after misfortune while his wealth accumulates. The Earl who had spent his life carelessly, squandering a lifetime's inheritance, produces effortlessly and profitably two children.

Eloisa, the daughter, was cast away on a sloop, and given up for dead. She was, however, saved, and in course of time married the Emperor of Morocco. But Henry did not know all this.

(2)

The Story of the Second Generation.

The Earl's two sons were Richard, named after the father, and Henry,[1] named after the uncle. Richard, the elder son and heir to the Earl's estate and title, was pampered by everybody. Harry, instead, was sent 'to be nursed by the robust wife of a neighbouring farmer, where, for the space of upwards of four years, he was honoured with no token from father or mother, save some casual messages, to know from time to time if the child was in health'.[2] From being placed in different situations, the brothers lived different kinds of life. The point of contrast has been explicitly stated:

> [The] education of the two children was extremely contrasted. Richard was already entitled my little Lord, was not permitted to breathe the rudeness of the wind. On his slightest indisposition the whole house was in alarms; his passions had full scope in all their infant irregularities; his genius was put into a hot-bed, by the warmth of applauses given to every flight of his opening fancy; and the whole family conspired, from the highest to the lowest, to the ruin of promising talents and a benevolent heart.
>
> Young Harry, on the other hand, had every member as well as feature exposed to all weathers; would run about, mother-naked, for near an hour, in a frosty morning, was neither physicked into delicacy, nor flattered into pride; scarce

1. To avoid confusion, we shall call the nephew Harry and the uncle Henry, though more often Clinton.

2. Op.cit., I, p.42.

> felt the convenience, and much less understood the vanity of clothing; and was daily occupied, in playing and wrestling with the pigs and two mongrel spaniels on the dunghill; or in kissing, scratching, or boxing with the children of the village.[1]

The situation is a hypothetical one; and the point of it is not the probability or otherwise, but the resulting character-formation. Brought up the way he was, Harry had, as Meekly (a friend of the Earl's but no sycophant) says, "the promise of the greatest philosopher and hero." By refusing to respect "superficial distinctions, which fashion had inadequately substituted as expressions of human greatness", he proved himself the philosopher; and "by the quickness of his feelings for injured innocence, and his boldness in defending those to whom his heart is attached", he proved himself at once "the hero and the man".[2] Free from the pride and prejudice of his class, he was capable of democratic sentiments, and could feel for those in distress. He had also the necessary physical toughness to cope with any eventuality whatsoever.

Henry Clinton, meanwhile, had assumed the name of Fenton and had been living a retired life in the neighbourhood for some time past. Nobody knew his real identity, and from the extreme privacy he maintained he was also viewed with suspicion. He accidentally met his namesake and nephew, and at once saw the sterling qualities that formed his character. The two grew attached to each other;

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1. Ibid., I, pp.42-43.
2. Ibid., I, p.49.

and though Harry did not know his uncle as uncle, he frequently called on him. Clinton became his adopted father and 'dear dada', and assumed the role of the mentor. Harry's familiarity with a stranger of quaint habits was not quite liked at the Earl's 'mansion-house' and he was sent for to live with his parents. Here his open, charitable and democratic disposition hardly found any scope. He even ran the risk of being spoiled. Clinton then took a drastic step. He conspired with Harry to kidnap him. They started living together near London, their whereabouts unknown to the Earl. Clinton now supervised Harry's development without any possibility of interference, and encouraged his 'natural' propensities.

From his upbringing among poor rustics, Harry in fact hardly required any education. One of the first things that his uncle did after he kidnapped him was to make him wait on servants, because "God made us all to be servants to each other: one man is not born a bit better than another; and he is the best and greatest of all who serves and attends the most, and requires least to be served and attended upon."[1] Harry performed the assignment with easy grace, without any sense of shame or debasement. He had lived among poor people and was not conscious of any distinctions due to rank and birth.

He had also been used to, and seen people, living with the minimum of wants. He would not therefore like to own things that were not for his immediate needs. Clinton furnished 'a large lumber room with thousands of coats, overcoats, shirts, waistcoats',

1. Ibid., I, p.178.

etc., of different sorts and sizes, left them at Harry's disposal, and asked him what he would do with them. Harry's spontaneous reply was that because he did not need them himself, he would give them to those who did. He was nevertheless personally grateful to Clinton for he had enabled him to do good to others. Clinton is struck with awed admiration and cries, "Whoever attempts to instruct thee, my angel, must himself, be instructed of heaven, who speaks by that sweet mouth."[1]

Had he been allowed to stay with the Earl, Harry might have acquired the prejudices of his class. Because of Clinton, any possible relapse has been prevented (cf. the episode of the embroidered coat[2]). Positive education comes, too, but it is easy to impart. Only the 'natural' propensities of Harry have to be encouraged and improved upon. Man is naturally good, or at worst a neutral subject which can be moulded to good or bad effect.

Richard continued to live with his father. He was 'sweetly dispositioned by nature', 'naturally unassuming, and modestly disposed;' but 'the unremitted adulation of domestics and dependents, with the complimentary artillery of all the neighbours and visitants, could not fail of some impression'.[3] This, however, did not quite spoil him, as Harry's example had not been entirely unproductive of good effects on him.[4] He was, therefore, 'easy to all who applied to him for any favour, exceeding charitable

1. Ibid., I, p.180.
2. Ibid., I, pp.89-95.
3. Ibid., IV, p.294.
4. Ibid., IV, p.294.

to the poor, and particularly fond of our Harry's foster-mother, and kind to her for Harry's sake.'[1]

When he was nineteen, he went on the grand tour, accompanied by his parents.[2] In the elegant circles of Paris, he lived an easy life of pleasure, 'frolicks and debaucheries'[3] and eventually got secretly married to one Angelica la Lis. The name is significant, and the sentimental attachment between the two, culminating in and surviving the marriage, does no discredit to either, in spite of the secrecy. Richard even stood up firmly against his parents' secret design to marry him off to a rich heiress. They did not know of the marriage, and thought of Richard's rumoured connexion with Angelica as of the dishonourable kind. When they knew the true nature of it, they were reconciled to it. From the purity of sentiments involved in the attachment, it is the kind of secret marriage that Henry Fairman, a lawyer of benevolent dispositions and the heir to a rich businessman, contracts in Bryan Perdue, and to which even Holcroft, the advocate of truth and sincerity in the simplest details of life, sees no serious objection. It is also not unlike the kind of attachment

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1. Ibid., IV, p.295.
2. What happened on the tour is elaborately dealt with in the 1792 edition as in the 1776 edition. In the 1859 edition, with a biographical preface by Charles Kingsley, it is much abridged. In the first edition, Richard does not go on the tour at all, and dies at home. The changes in the 1776, and the 1792 edition seem to have been due to Brooke himself and I have therefore thought it necessary to make some reference to this part of Richard's career. The references are to the 1792 edition.
3. The Fool of Quality, 1792, V, p.5.

that Henry Clinton was likely to get into.[1] The happiness of Richard, however, was short-lived. He died of the small-pox, Angelica could not survive him; nor could Lady Moreland live after the death of her 'beloved children'.

Harry now returned to the Earl as a comfort in his bereavement. Clinton joined them soon afterwards. Helped by Meekly, the Earl had seen by now that his dislike of trade and commerce had been wrong. Brotherly love got the better of his pride. Everybody was happy in the reunion. The Earl died in peace, reconciled to his brother, and initiated by him into the mysteries of religion. Harry succeeded to the title and the estate, and was married to the princess of Morocco, the daughter of Louisa who had been discovered by now. The true, the ideal gentleman, worthy of his rank, Harry the Earl of Moreland continued to indulge in charitable deeds as he had done before under the tutelage of Clinton and with his money.

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1. Brooke's approval of Richard's secret marriage can be partly explained by his own secret marriage with his young cousin whose guardian he had been appointed. Some more of the auto-biographical material that has gone into the novel may be noted here. Miss Golding and Louisa whom Henry Clinton married, and Fanny Goodall (later Lady Maitland) whom he did not marry but who fell in love with him, were all very much younger than him, as Brooke's wife was very much younger than Brooke. Brooke had numerous progeny, but only a daughter lived to care for him in old age. (A son went to Canada and then to India where he was killed.) Similarly all Clinton's children die early, except one, a daughter. Brooke's own suffering and his need for religious comfort, seem to inform Henry Clinton's situation to a considerable extent.

III

Implications of the Story of the First Generation

The contrast between the brothers in the first generation, I think, embodies a social conflict, the conflict between two classes. The Earl is the representative of the nobility, Henry Clinton of Merchants. The confrontation between them, when Henry waits upon the Earl for the restoration of the rights of London merchants, is right at the core of at least the story of the first generation. The moral thesis which it expresses acquires additional substance and strength from the immense superiority, in temporal as well as spiritual terms, that Henry Clinton has acquired over the Earl. Long before the end of the novel, Henry is the master of millions. He started with a handicap, but has beaten his brother by leagues. And this gives a manifest validity to his claims on behalf of his fellow traders.

It is true that the Earl is not reduced to total economic incapacity. This, I think, happens for two reasons. First, Henry Brooke's kind of temperament would not permit of excessive misery or suffering, nor of complete spiritual degeneracy. Suffering there is, but either as a spiritual purgatory, or when relief is at hand. Secondly, the nobility is not to be presented in such dark colours, nor as such utter failures, as, to an extent, became its lot in later radical novels. Yet, it is significant that the Earl has to marry a citizen's daughter to stabilize his economic position. Though a common practice with the gentry,

such marriage was, as Bage[1] for one recognized, not a very legitimate mode of repairing a tottering economy.

It would seem that there is not much of a difference between the elder brother's mode of mending his fortune, and the younger's of earning one. Henry married Mr. Golding's daughter, and inherited his prosperous business and a property got together in over fifty years. But there is an essential distinction. Henry's life has been different from the Earl's from the very beginning. While the latter always lived a life of ease and luxury, Henry has worked every inch of his way up. From the time he was sensible of his father's partiality for the elder brother, he was incited by the ambition ("whether laudable or not" he queries) to raise himself on a level with a brother who treated him "with neglect and contempt". He had been indefatigable in his studies at school and college, as also during his apprenticeship with Mr. Golding.[2] Under his careful and efficient management, the affairs of his master prospered as the "affairs of Potiphar prospered under the hands of Joseph".[3] The partnership on advantageous terms was his reward for hard work, and Golding's generosity in offering it to him incited him "to double application and sagacity", and "all the eyes of Argus were opened within me for superintending and guarding the interests of my patron."[4] He had 'earned' the confidence of Golding, and the partnership, before he married his daughter. The marriage was also a matter of deep

1. Vide., Henry Davis in Barham Downs, BNL, op.cit., IX, p.244.
2. The Fool of Quality (1st ed.), op.cit., III, pp.30-1.
3. Ibid., III, p.6.
4. Ibid., III, p.7.

emotional attachment originating in gratitude on Miss Golding's part as her honour had once been saved by Henry. Golding having no son, the marriage may have been a matter of convenience as the Earl's was, though obviously a matter of convenience not for Henry but for Golding. Brooke anyway does not view it as such.

And the difference between the final temporal possessions of the two brothers arises not from Henry having married Miss Golding, nor from his having worked hard. Commerce is the source of his wealth. Hard work and application acquire meaning only insofar as they are directed towards this profitable concern. In only four years, during the period of his apprenticeship, from wise and judicious investment, his patrimony of twelve thousand pounds had nearly doubled.[1] Then, during the regency of Cromwell, under the protection of the British flag, they sent out ships to the east and to the west, and "wealth came pouring in upon us from all quarters of the globe".[2] The extent of this wealth is unimaginable. Let alone Henry's share in the profits, Golding alone had "accumulated as much as, in these times, would set kings at contention, and be accounted a worthy cause for spilling the blood of thousands."[3] On his death, Henry found himself in possession of near a million of money. He says he knew not how it was that through the subsequent course of his life, though he never sued for debt, nor gave a denial to the wants of those who asked, nor turned

1. Ibid., III, p.5.
2. Ibid., III, pp.45-6.
3. Ibid., III, p.77.

from him that desired to borrow from him, "uncoveted wealth came pouring in upon me."[1]

This wealth might have been uncoveted, but there can be no doubt as to its source. Henry has accounts all over Europe and we frequently find him going about settling and bringing them up to date. Commerce is the source of his wealth, and wealth the source of power. He takes everything in his stride - courts and princes all. Sometimes from his benevolence, and his quixotic acts in saving the lives of others (as in the case of the Duke of Navarre in France who was his rival for the hand of Louisa), but primarily from his being able to help kings and princes out of financial straits, he exercises a lot of influence. When Harry, who was then passing as the son of Fenton/Clinton, was presented to King William, Lord Portland introduced him as the son of the gentleman "who advanced us two hundred thousand pounds on our expedition from Holland".[2] The King was so impressed by Harry that he wanted to receive him at court on a permanent basis. He sent a messenger, but Clinton got away with "I am willing to advance to you two hundred thousand pounds more toward his Majesty's present expedition against the French".[3] Such is the power of money ('money makes the mare to go; ay, and queens and kings too, sometimes, to go in a manner very different from what they might otherwise choose to go', as Lord M. in Clarissa says)[4] that we hear

1. Ibid., III, p.87.
2. Ibid., IV, p.206.
3. Ibid., IV, p.245.
4. Richardson, Clarissa, Everyman's Library, 1962, II, p.412.

no more of the King's designs on Harry.

On Harry's return to the Earl after Richard's death, the Earl one day expressed surprise that Harry talked of his uncle as "one of the richest and greatest of men upon earth; as a prince, as an emperor, enabled to give away fortune and provinces at pleasure". Harry's reply is, "And he is, my Lord, ... he is greater than any prince or emperor upon earth".[1] As the Dutch inn-keeper informs Meekly, Henry is the prince of merchants and "our merchants are princes above all lords."[2] Like Sidonia in Coningsby, he has great influence over kings and courts, and in both instances the power is the power of money earned from investments all over the world.

Henry's mode of earning a fortune, his hard work and application, the source of his wealth, all clearly indicate that the contrast between the brothers is an expression of a larger conflict; the extent of his wealth and influence indubitably establish the importance of the mercantile community over the nobility. The brothers received different kinds of training, and chose different modes of living. Henry's situation has proved by far the more profitable and wiser. Before his stature, the Earl's is insignificant. With everything at his beck and disposal,

1. Op.cit., V, p.29. The 1792 ed. has a different continuation and more relevant to the subject at issue: "To speak only of his temporal wealth or power, the most inconsiderable part of his value, he can do, as I may say, what he pleases in England. The ministry are at his beck; they profess themselves his servants; and even his majesty acknowledges himself deeply his debtor, and owes him, I dare say, half a million." (V, p.82)

2. Op.cit., V, p.64.

he is not likely to care for a pampered and vain Earl. When he gives pride for pride, in the confrontation between the two, his pride is backed by a consciousness of the immensity of his wealth and influence, and of the futility and comparative meagreness of his brother's. He cuts him to size not only with what he says but also with what he achieves the next day. What is the Earl worth after all? Henry is richer, and his is not the same kind of wealth as his brother's, - it has greater mobility, hence greater effectiveness; and there is an ideological basis of his claims to recognition and precedence.

IV

Ideological Bases of Brooke's Position.

In one of the dialogues between the author and his friend, Brooke gives his theory of what constitutes a man's worth and utility in society. There are, according to him, only two methods of procuring sustenance on earth, the first by the labour of one's own hands, the second by the employment of the hands of others.[1] Among those who disturb the labour of others are the "rascally Alexanders and Caesars, whether ancient or modern."[2] And among those who will not labour are "all who have the happiness of being born to no manner of end; such as the monks of every country, the Dervises of Persia, the Bramins of India, the Mandarines of China, and the Gentlemen of these free and polished nations."[3]

Brooke is against all forms of economic parasitism. The productive classes are the most useful and hence most deserving our respect. As Henry Clinton puts it, the "wealth, prosperity, and importance of all this world are founded and erected on three living pillars, the TILLER of the ground, the MANUFACTURER, and the MERCHANT," and "as nothing is truly estimable, save in proportion to its utility, these are consequently, very far from being contemptible characters."[4] In Brooke's scale of values, however, the merchant is the most important class: "the merchant,

1. Ibid., I, p.157.
2. Ibid., I, p.158.
3. Ibid., I, p.157.
4. Ibid., I, pp.103-104.

above all, is extensive, considerable, and respectable, by his occupation," and it is he who furnishes "every comfort, convenience, and elegance of life."[1] Unlike the tiller and the manufacturer, the merchant is independent of all lands, and of "the gentlemen of large landed properties." He is, in fact, "the general patron" of all land.[2] It may be remembered in this connexion that Brooke's personal regard for the merchant was so great that he once refused to contest a seat to Parliament against an "excelling trader,"[3] and his attitude may have been formed by the fact that a nephew, Colonel Robert Brooke, once sent to the family a sum of £13,000 from India.[4]

Virtually all Brooke's theoretical enunciations on the subject of commerce are contained in the dialogue between the two brothers when a deputation of merchants waited on the Earl,[5] and in Meekly's narration of his experiences from nine months sojourn in Holland.[6] The arguments do not always cohere, but some broad points may be deduced.

According to Henry, then, "industry and commerce are the natural, the living, the never-failing fountains, from whence the wealth of this world can alone be taught to flow."[7] Meekly makes

1. Ibid., I, p.104.
2. Ibid., I, pp.105-106.
3. The Fool of Quality, with a biographical preface by Charles Kingsley, 1859, I, p.xxxiii.
4. Ibid., p.xxxvi.
5. See The Fool of Quality, 1st ed., op.cit., pp.100-108.
6. See ibid., V, pp.35-49.
7. Ibid., I, pp.107-108.

some slight distinction in favour of industry. His immediate concern is to emphasize the need of employment for all, as also of increased internal navigation, and to point out how industry which is the cause of prosperity in Holland and China can be encouraged in Britain. Industry, he says, is "the natural parent of opulence", and of "the wealth of this world".[1] It incites to commerce and can thus be said to precede it.[2] But as "no man's industry is sufficient to his own occasions", "the mutual assistance denominated commerce ... is necessary to the well-being of all people". The advantage of commerce consists in supplying "mutual wants with mutual redundancies."[3] He has earlier discussed how it all works:

> Different men are endowed with different talents and powers, insufficient in many respects, though superfluous in others, to their own occasions.... [The same is true of nations.]
>
> Now, these alternate qualities of deficience and abundance, at once invite and impel all men, and all countries, to claim and to impart that reciprocal assistance which is denominated commerce. Each gives what he can spare, each receives what he wants; the exchange is to the mutual advantage of parties ...[4]

Adam Smith did not quite admit of the natural endowment of talents and powers, which, according to him, are mainly differentiations resulting from division of labour.[5] But

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1. Ibid., V, pp.36, 44.
2. Ibid., V, p.37.
3. Ibid., V, p.44.
4. Ibid., V, pp.39-40.
5. Wealth of Nations (Bk. I, Ch.II) op.cit., I, p.21. - "the difference of natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions, when grown up to maturity, is not upon many occasions so much the cause, as the effect of the division of labour."

division of labour itself, which is at the root of all human progress, is the result of that specifically human propensity, the ability to barter, truck and exchange, which distinguishes mankind from animals.[1] This primacy, given to commerce, with maybe some slight change in emphasis, had become by now a common feature of the advanced opinion of the day. By the end of the seventeenth century trade, commerce and industry had begun to receive favourable treatment in literature. Fénélon, over and again, celebrated the virtues of industry, and his utopias are often flourishing trading communities.[2]

What is, however, more significant about Meekly's thesis of wants and redundancies is that it has suggestions of the rationale of that enlightened individualism, that 'natural identity of interests' of which Adam Smith was soon to emerge as the greatest prophet. Adam Smith has the following in The Wealth of Nations:

(a) Every workman has a great quantity of his own work to dispose of beyond what he himself had occasion for; and every other workman being exactly in the same situation, he is enabled to exchange a great quantity of his own goods for a great quantity, or, what comes to the same thing, for the price of a great quantity of theirs. He supplies them abundantly with what they have occasion for, and they accommodate him as amply with what he has occasion for, and a general plenty diffuses itself, through all the different ranks of society.[3]

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1. See ibid., BK I, Ch.ii, pp.17-20.
2. See Telemachus (1699), Smollett's translation, 1776, I, pp.65-66, where Fenelon gives his reasons for the prosperity of the Phoenicians. See also Vol. II, pp.1-42. (Fénélon also spoke of the benefits of everything being exported and imported without restraint. II, p.24).
3. Op.cit., Bk. I, Ch.i,I, pp.14-15.

(b) And thus the certainty of being able to exchange that surplus part of the produce of his own labour which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he may have occasion for, encourages man to apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and bring to perfection whatever talent or genius he may possess for that particular business.[1]

The Wealth of Nations came out in 1776; The Fool of Quality between 1766 and 1770. This is not, however, a case of literary or ideological indebtedness so much as of a common climate of thought. Adam Smith owed many of his ideas to his predecessors, particularly the Physiocrats in France; and even a casual look into contemporary reviews is enough to impress us with the huge crop of pamphlets and treatises on political economy that appeared during the period. The social and economic condition of the day was forcing up problems that exacted widespread notice, and brought together in ideological proximity people as far apart as Adam Smith from an expanding industrial city like Glasgow and Henry Brooke, a retired Irish country gentleman.[2]

This is not to suggest any simple formula of determinism. In fact, such a complicated set of factors contribute to anybody's

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1. Ibid., Bk.I, Ch.ii,I,pp.20-21.

2. See, in this connexion, Sir Lewis Namier, England in the age of the American Revolution (1930), Papermac, 1961, pp.34-35: 'In fact, in the eighteenth century detailed economic information and sound economic speculation is formed even in quarters where one would hardly have expected them. In 1757 Newcastle transmitted to William Murray (subsequently Lord Mansfield) two papers on financial matters "from two country gentlemen, Mr. Campion and Mr. Page ... the one from an old man of seventy-four who never was above one year and half in busyness and that forty years ago, the other from a clerk in the South Sea House in the year 1720, retired, and settled in the country, now for near thirty years; the last is a master-piece."'

world outlook that most often it would be the easiest and safest way out to ignore them altogether. But the safest way is not always the best - and may often be a way of avoiding difficulties instead of trying to tackle them, and, moreover, in isolation most subjects would look so slender and bare as to lose all serious interest.

In the present case, however, it would not be difficult to see that the different situations of Adam Smith and Henry Brooke would preclude a complete ideological identity. Brooke, as we shall see, supported aspects of commercial and economic Protection. And he supported corporations and monopolies of businessmen. The opposition to them is left to the Earl before his final conversion. In his conversation with Clinton who is waiting on him for the restoration of the rights granted to the merchants by the city Charter, he says:

> I have no quarrel ... with the high and mighty my lords the merchants, if each could be humbly content with the profits of his profession, without forming themselves into companies, exclusive of their brethren, our itinerant merchants and pedlars. I confess myself an enemy to the monopolies of your chartered companies and city corporations; and I can perceive no evil consequence to the public or the state, if all such associations were this moment dissolved.[1]

The system of modern Protection was in full force from 1688 to 1776. It had 'helped to overcome the apathy and dullness of a purely agricultural population, and draw a part of the people into trade.' It was 'in many cases ... distinctly opposed to the interests of agriculture.'[2] But the landed gentry, for various

1. Op.cit., I, p.105.
2. Arnold Toynbee, Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the 18th Century in England, 4th ed., 1894, pp.78-9.

reasons, did not always oppose the system. By 1776, the system had virtually collapsed. Yet some sting had been left in the tail, and Adam Smith virulently attacked the system and spoke contemptuously of the 'clamours and sophistry of merchants and manufacturers'. and 'the sneaking arts of underling tradesmen' which persuaded the landed gentry to concede to their demands. And we know that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the chartered companies and trading corporations came up for growing criticism.

The contempt for cits and traders, then, came not only from the proud aristocrat, and the sensitive middle class individual (whose sensibility may have been in certain cases a form of intellectual snobbery), but also from sections of the bourgeoisie itself. Brooke, while adopting some of the contemporary ideas that were pointing the way towards a realization of laissez-faire principles, still accepted the validity of an ideology that was fast getting out of date.

The events in The Fool of Quality cover the period from before the civil war and the reign of Cromwell to just a little after the Glorious Revolution. It is likely that in the interests of historical authenticity the advanced opinion (that of Clinton) is shown as supporting Protection. But some of the ideas of Brooke's own day have obviously been grafted on to the past. It is not always easy, of course, to deduce any cogently worked out and consistent body of thought from a novel. Even into a serious treatise, the chaos and contradictions of a period do find their way. A novel's disadvantages in this respect are obvious, as are

the disadvantages of a minor novelist and retired country gentleman against a professor of moral philosophy. Broadly they share some ideas of the period, yet Brooke could not have been as sharply aware as Adam Smith was, for example, of how the mercantile system, the medieval regulations about apprenticeship, etc., city-corporations and monopolies, were all injurious to the free development of industry and commerce.

V

The Nature of Brooke's Utopia: Implications and Limitations.

There was, even in the purely economic sense, a lot that was utopian about the theory of 'the natural identity of interests' and of complete freedom. Adam Smith himself saw this, and 'remarked that to 'expect' 'that the freedom of trade' - for which he earnestly contended - 'should ever be entirely restored in Great Britain,' was 'as absurd as to expect that an Oceana or Utopia should ever be established in it.'[1]

With Brooke, the question is not only of the superior material (or even spiritual) attainments of the businessman over a lord's, or of the superiority of one vocation over another, nor of commerce being necessary to the well-being of all people. In fact, according to him, the only way a world of peace and plenty can be realized is through trade and commerce, with, as we shall see, some divine assistance. It is the merchant, according to Henry Clinton, who "makes man to be literally the lord of creation, ... furnishes to each the product of all lands, and the labours of all nations; and thus knits into one family, and weaves into one web, the affinity and brotherhood of all mankind."[2] Meekly talks of industry as a blessing, as well as a duty, and

1. L.L. Price, A Short History of Political Economy in England, 15th ed., 1937, p.3.
2. Op.cit., I, p.104.

regards it as a guarantee of the equal rights of all, and of peace on all earth.[1] If only as he says a little later, a method could be devised to encourage manufacturers "to persevere in their industry, and improve in their arts, by a ready conveyance and sale of all their redundancies, neither want nor superfluity could take place upon earth."[2] All that is necessary so that these laudable objectives could be achieved is "the removal of envious obstacles,"[3]

For Meekly the removal of envious obstacles primarily means adequate facilities for internal navigation. To students of Adam Smith, the case for navigable canals in Britain would not come as anything new, and, as a footnote says, within ten years of the events of the novel, many new canals were opened in England.[4]

With the necessary facilities created for internal navigation (and not very curiously, with a strong navy), commerce can work all sorts of miracles. After Meekly's arguments have convinced the Earl of the need and importance of free commerce, the Earl says:

> I protest, Mr. Meekly, ... you have pushed this matter into mathematical demonstration. What a happy - what a glorious prospect now opens to my view! How easily, how speedily, how profitably, might this method be put in execution

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1. See **ibid.**, V, pp.36-7.
2. Ibid., V, p.40.
3. Ibid., V, p.44.
4. Ibid., V, p.49. See in this connexion T.C. Barker, 'The Beginnings of the Canal Age in the British Isles', in Studies in the Industrial Revolution, ed. L.S. Pressnell, 1960, pp.1-22.

> throughout the earth! There is no deficiency of rivers or collateral streams for the purpose. The sinking into the earth would give vent to new springs, and extract plenty of water in all places for an inland navigation; and half the number of hands that perish through war and want, might be peacefully and plentifully employed in accomplishing this weal of mankind. Famine and depradation would then cease. Nation would no longer rise up against nation, nor man against man. The earth, by culture, would soon become capable of sustaining tenfold the number of its present inhabitants. We should no more be tempted to push each other from existence. We should find ourselves mutually interested in preserving and multiplying the lives of all from whose labours we were to derive such advantages. All would be plenty, all peace and benevolence throughout the globe. The number of inhabitants, instead of being a burden, would then become the riches of every climate. All hands would be set to work, when thus assured of a purchaser for every effect of labour. The buzz of wheels, reels, and looms; the sound of hammers, files, and forges; with the shouts of vintage and the songs of harvest, would be heard in all lands![1]

The idea of progress in these lines could have very well provoked a Malthus to produce his theory of population. By the end of the century, however, a mood of cynical disillusionment had begun to set in, of which Malthus may be taken to be an expression. To us the utopian character of the Earl's vision of the future is far more evident. But even as it is, his easy and quick transition

1. Op.cit., V, pp.45-46. A passage may here be quoted from a much later day, if only to show that people towards the middle of the next century continued to retain Brooke's kind of mental ideological frame. Edward Baines, jun., editor of the Leeds Mercury, 24 June, 1843, wrote: 'I admit that the manufacturing districts have a repulsive exterior. The smoke that hangs over them, - their noisy, bustling, and dirty streets, - [so on] ... are little calculated to gratify "ears polite", or to please the eye accustomed to parks and green fields. But beneath this unpleasing exterior, there moves steadily on that energetic and persevering industry, which, combined with the highest mechanical skill, large capital, and mercantile intelligence and enterprise, constitutes the main spring of all the foreign commerce of England, - which purchases raw materials, luxuries, and necessaries from other countries and thereby animates the industry of every quarter of the globe, as well as enriches our own island, - which has added more to the wealth, population, and power of England than the boldest speculator could have thought possible at the close of the last century'. Quoted by Donald Read, Press and People, 1790-1850, 1961, p. 1. Brooke's utopia of the future is not far in the distance.

from a doubting David to an enthusiastic panegyrist is not quite convincing, despite the rising crescendo of the passage, the well-regulated, graduated progression from the matter-of-fact to the impassioned and rhetorical. More, coming at the end of an argument in favour of increased inland navigation, and arising out of it, the triumphant note at the end is not of a piece with the whole. But this only makes the contradiction in Brooke's position and the parochial perspective of his utopia all the more manifest. The universal happiness stipulated for in this passage, and elsewhere in Meekly's and Clinton's arguments, cannot accrue from any facility for free commerce in Britain, or for the British merchant. Though general welfare is being talked of, the interest of the British trader is the immediate motive and the specific objective.

We may remember in this connexion that one of the factors that helped Clinton's and Golding's acquisition of wealth was the naval victories of Britain during the reign of Cromwell, which have also been celebrated in the story of the Reprobate.[1] Then, during his interview with the Earl, Clinton, even while he attaches greater importance to trade, makes it clear that a flourishing trade and a strong navy have to go together. He cites the example of the United Provinces. They, he says, 'do not contain land sufficient for the subsistence of one third of their inhabitants; but they are a nation of merchants; the world

1. The 1776 edition leaves it out, as does Charles Kingsley later, though Wesley retained it in his abridgement. The story was also separately published.

furnishes them with an abundance of all good things; by commerce they have arrived at empire;[1] they have assumed to themselves the principality of the ocean; and by being lords of the ocean, are in a measure become the proprietors of all lands.'[2] Then he goes on to underline how best England can serve her interests:

> Should England ever open her eyes to her own interest, she will follow the same prosperous and ennobling profession; she will conform to the consequences of her situation. She will see that, without a naval pre-eminence, she cannot be safe, and that, without trade, her naval power cannot be supported. Her glory will also follow from this source of her interests, and a sail-yard will become the highest sceptre of her dignity. She will then find, that a single triumph of her flag will be more available for her prosperity, than the conquest of the four continents; and her pre-eminence by sea will carry and diffuse her influence over all lands; and, that universal influence is universal dominion.[3]

A shrewd maxim that in the last line, the usefulness of which has been proved over the centuries, and perhaps more today than ever before it can and does serve as the guiding motto of the enlightened bourgeois, who would not look for conquest for the sake of conquest, but would seek influence, for it nevertheless gives him dominion over a foreign market. Perhaps some such approach lay behind the advocacy of conciliation with America - an approach that sections of the mercantile community subscribed to and worked for.

It is clear then that trade and empire must go together. Universal happiness, and the promise of peace, of the kingdom

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1. It may be noted here that Henry Mackenzie was critical of the British merchants for having arrived at empire through commerce in India. Cf. The Man of Feeling, Works, Glasgow 1818, Vol. I, pp.138-140.
2. Op.cit., I, pp.106-7.
3. Ibid., I, p.107.

of heaven on earth, are blinkers meant to hide the sordidness of selfish, national interests, and high-falutin to sanctify them. Adam Smith, we know, approved of the navigation acts. But he made this exception primarily in the interests of national defence. Brooke also speaks of defence ("without a naval-pre-eminence, she cannot be safe"), but in his scheme of things a strong navy is complementary, if not exactly essential, to the prosperity of British trade. He is still in favour of some kind of mercantile protection.

VI

Implications of the Story of the Second Generation: Its Relationship with the Story of the First Generation.

The story of the second generation is not as clearly, as patently amenable to an interpretation in terms of an economic motif as the story of the first generation. It is a child's education that is the main concern of the author in at least the early sections relating to the life of the two sons of the Earl. It may be arguable that Harry's most remarkable acquisition from his life among a rustic rabble is the quality of tough endurance and uncommon physical fitness, and that this quality is not dissimilar to what is required for a Robinson Crusoe-like achievement, or for Henry Clinton's rise in life, or for the career of a Manchester manufacturer like John Thornton. The ability to cope with the rough and tumble of life, the ability to survive the brute struggle of life would be useful. In his childhood Harry engages in two life and death fights with boys older than himself (Perhaps it is significant that one of them is a young gentleman, and the other a poor village lad who has to pick up nuts from the forest for a living.). Even a casual reading of the accounts of these two fights would lessen the general impression of amiableness that Brooke produces. These are relentless, bloody encounters like that between two fierce beasts of the jungle. It is going to be a difficult world and the quality of endurance, the ability to carry on a sustained war to a victorious close, would help. The Darwinian 'survival of the fittest', we know, became one of the

ideological planks of, even as it in a sense derived from, a society based on laissez-faire.[1]

If this should seem to be a little far-fetched, there is still an essential connexion between the story of the first generation and that of the second - a connexion of which little notice has been taken. Critics have generally concentrated on Harry and his childhood adventures, and been oblivious of the contrast between the careers of his father and uncle. This has led, if not to a complete misreading of the novel, then to an emphasis on details which in isolation seem to have but little social significance.

Brooke himself is partly responsible for the lapse on the part of his critics. The title and the emphasis in it on Harry and his quixotic benevolence are enough to mislead. They seem to suggest that everything in the novel but the career of Harry is extraneous. They also tend to distract the reader and the critic from the presence of the mercantile motif in Harry himslef. What seems to provide some semblance of a more justifiable reason for ignoring Clinton's career is the massed emphasis on Harry in the text itself. The contrast in the second generation is all elaborately and compactly put in about the first one hundred and fifty pages of the first volume. Harry's childhood exploits are also some of the best written, the most vibrant episodes in the

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1. See, in this connexion, ibid., V, p.36, Meekly to the Earl: 'Many mental virtues, also, as well as temporal benefits, follow in the train of industry; it makes men healthful, brave, honest, social, and pacific. He, who labours hard to acquire a property, will struggle hard to preserve it, and exercise will make him active, robust, and able for the purpose'. (Emphasis mine.)

novel. The initial situation, then, dealing with the contrast between nature and art as important in itself, gets a hold over the reader's mind which it is not easy to dislodge. The impression is kept alive, and further enforced, by variations on the same theme, later in the novel, after Harry is 'kidnapped'. His confrontation, for example, with Lord Bottom purports a moral not different from the moral of his first appearance at his father's 'mansion-house'. He is the fool, the unspoilt child of nature, in both situations. His innocence no doubt offers an alternative to the foppery and pretensions of rank. But the fact that he is upholding in all this the values cherished and/or approved by the ideal merchant-prince seems to be forgotten. The story of the merchant-prince (and the way it has been scattered over the whole novel in small bits) does not provide much help either. Its significance is quite likely to be missed, because, even as it is, Brooke, from the prolixity of his work among other things, tends to encourage casual reading.

But it should be remembered that contrast is the general frame in which the novel has been placed, and it would not be fair to ignore one of the contrasted patterns and concentrate entirely on the other. This is what critics have generally done. It seems to me that not only is the contrast in the first generation significant too, it is in fact thematically more significant. It is true that in the first generation, the basis of contrast is the relative importance of rank and trade, and in the second emphasis lies on Rousseauistic theories of education, and on the democratic implications of Harry's position vis-a-vis the nobility. But these are aspects of the same ideological stand-point, at least they have

been viewed as such in The Fool of Quality. It is one of Brooke's weaknesses that there is much that is woolly and romantic in both stories, perhaps more in the story of the second generation. Yet it is possible to see that the story of the second generation is a logical extension of, is in some respects parallel and in many respects subservient to, the story of the first generation.

Harry the protagonist in the second generation is a version of Henry Clinton, the dominant figure in the first. The parallel is so obvious, it is surprising how anybody, for all Brooke's failings, could have missed it and thought of Harry being groomed for the career of a nobleman. He is kidnapped, and adopted by Clinton as his son, when Richard is alive. It is only after Richard's death, late in the novel, that Harry comes back to inherit the estate and title. To attribute to Clinton a clairvoyance which, in spite of his mystic divinity, he does not possess, would be unfair. Harry has been ignored and neglected. He is more or less in the same predicament as Clinton in his childhood, and he gives a fresh impetus, a fresh zest and meaning to the life of the recluse. His life is inalienably linked with Clinton's. They are brought together early in the novel, and in the end they are the only ones to survive the other members of the family. While the long separation between the senior Clintons is a symbolic presentation of the difference in their world-outlooks, Harry's long companionship with Clinton makes it clear that Harry, though an Earl in the end, is to carry forward and realize the aims

of the merchant prince. He is Clinton's 'son', his name-sake, and was meant to succeed to his business, rather than to the Earldom. He is formed in the image of his 'dada'. On his return to the mansion-house, after Richard's death, Meekly, when he saw him of a sudden one night, thought he "beheld my very benefactor [Henry Clinton] newly arisen, like a young Phoenix, from the ashes of old age."[1] He also gets the kind of bride that Clinton had in his Louisa.[2] Still more important is the fact that his aim after he succeeds to the Earldom is to promote acts of utility, for example, to do something for the increase of navigable canals in Britain.[3] If Harry is the ideal nobleman, he is formed in the image of the ideal merchant-prince.

That there is a significant connexion between the two generations is borne out even from the way their stories have been placed together. Brooke is open to all sorts of criticism, and to easy mockery. Walter Raleigh said about the novel that 'such unity as it has is due chiefly to the binder.'[4] But such flippancy, apart from being in bad taste, is highly misleading. The book is loose, and there are all sorts of irrelevant episodes. Yet, the two main stories have a connexion that is due to something more than the main characters belonging to the same family. The

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1. Ibid., V, p.67.
2. See, ibid., V, p.268; pp.272-3.
3. Ibid., V, pp.48-9.
4. The English Novel (1894), 1916, p.213.

story of the first generation is scattered over the novel, and if for that reason it tends to be ignored, it nevertheless gives a sense of oneness to the whole. While Harry's story is in progress, Clinton's is being unfolded, and it is there as a constant background presence, as a constant frame of reference. The story of the first generation could have been narrated all at once before the author embarked upon the story of the second generation. This is what Mrs. Inchbald does in A Simple Story, and to a lesser degree in Nature and Art where the scheme of two contrasted patterns of brothers (cousins in the second generation) is similar to, and may have been borrowed from, The Fool of Quality. Brooke, instead, makes a skilful distribution of Clinton's story over the whole length of the novel. The result is that the two stories are co-extensive, and run concurrently with each other. If it is a mere artifice that the narrative in each case is suspended every now and then, the artifice, it must be conceded, is a useful one. For there could hardly be a better way of underlining the essential oneness of the two themes. It is a superficial difference that in the first generation, the respective merit of the two classes contending for power and precedence is viewed in terms of actual achievement, and the story of the second generation provides opportunity for a study in growth and postulates the ideal mode of preparation for the life of economic utility. The story of the first generation is the outer frame that binds the novel. It gives a local, temporal meaning to the story of the juniors. Any distraction, therefore, from the theme of the conflict between the two classes struggling for supremacy

would lead to a misreading of the novel, as also to an isolated view of the educational theories that were coming up during the period; it would be to miss the pragmatic for the speculative and the concrete for the woolly.

VII

An Important Aspect of Brooke's Idea of Education

The whole purpose of the education of Harry Moreland is to turn out the ideal merchant-prince. But if the mode of his education and the related problems belong to a somewhat rarefied sphere of speculation, one of the inset stories in the novel hardly leaves any doubt about the real end and direction of Brooke's pedagogic views. It is the story of Hammel Clement,[1] a failed man of letters, who is adopted by Clinton as tutor and companion to Harry. It states the 'utilitarian' point of view in education without any reservations.

Clement is of middle class origin. His father, Bartholomew Clement, was a retailer of hard-ware, but avaricious and snobbish, 'low-bred and of narrow capacity.' 'Proceeding in what they call the dog-trot of life, and having a single eye to the making of money, he became vastly rich.'[2] He wanted his son to be a gentleman and sent him to Westminster School and from there to Cambridge. From his stay at these fashionable resorts, Hammel acquires the habits of a gentleman, and begins to look down upon his father, and sigh for his 'reptile state' of a trader and mechanic.[3]

His education has been in the classical languages, and when his father marries again, and disowns him, leaving him to fend

1. The story was published by Leigh Hunt in a collection of Classic Tales in which the other stories are by Goldsmith.
2. Op.cit., I, p.224.
3. Ibid., I, p.225.

for himself, his troubles begin. They are in part due to the change in his father's feelings for him, and the machinations of the step-mother, and, at a later stage, to the mean lasciviousness of a political luminary at court with whom he came in contact when he set up as a political writer. But in the main it is his faulty education that is at the root of all his suffering. He cannot engage in any profitable trade or occupation.

Left entirely on his own, he one day comes across one Mr. Goodville, who is impressed by his learning and tries to find him a place. He has influence in many respectable and well-placed families, of businessmen in particular. But nothing can be done for Clement. For, he does not write a fine hand,[1] has no skill in arithmetic, does not understand the Italian method of book-keeping, has made no progress in geometry, nor in the science of fortification, has not applied himself to gunnery or engineering, nor does he know anything about navigation and the use of charts and compass, nor anything about architecture or the drawing of plans and sections, nor about gauging and surveying. Every time Goodville returns to Clement with the offer of a new job, he is disappointed. Clement cannot take it. He cannot get into the holy orders either, for his education has all been in the classics and not in theology.[2] Goodville's final words of despair are:

> ... by all I can find, you know no one thing, of use to yourself or any other person living, either with respect to this world or the world to come. Could you make a pin,

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1. One of the first things that Fred Vincy, in Middlemarch, has to learn under Caleb Garth is to write a fine, legible hand.

2. Op.cit., I, pp.231-234.

or weave a cabbage net, or shape a cobbler's last,

> or a waistcoat button, or form a pill-box, or hew a block for a barber, or do any of those things by which millions daily maintain themselves, in supplying the wants and occasions, or fashions and vanities of others, you might not be under the necessity of perishing.[1]

To those familiar with the later reaction to utilitarianism, the passage may seem to have ironic undertones. But it is all seriously meant. Goodville advises Clement to fix on some craft, some trade, because it is 'industry alone, employed on articles that are useful and beneficial to society, that constitutes the true riches of all mankind.'[2] The humanist ideal of education as the full-flowering of the individual are far from the author's intentions; the individual is to be trained as a cog in the productive machinery.

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1. Ibid., I, p.234.
2. Ibid., I, pp.235-6.

VIII

Benevolence and Religion

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Harry has not been bred to any manner of trade or craft. He has a secure, inexhaustible source of income; all he has to do is to indulge in charity. Goodville has no money with which to help Clement. Harry and his uncle have, and they help him as they help others. But early in the novel the rationale of their charity has been clearly stated. Harry has been supplied with thousands of ready-to-wear clothes so that he could give them to the needy, but he is warned that it would not be discreet of him to give these clothes to the common beggars who came every day to their door.[1] Charity is meant for meritorious poverty. Clinton himself is prevented by one Sir Thomas Bicker from wasting his money on criminals and reprobates.[2] To Sir Thomas of course he says that 'that charity must be very tardy which waits to be assured of the merit of its object.' for 'Christ himself cured ten lepers, while he knew that nine of them were unworthy of his graciousness,' but he immediately remembers that he should not cast his seed on a wholly barren land.[3]

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1. Ibid., I, p.180. We may recall in this connexion that Clarissa's charity was restricted to "the lame, the blind, the sick, and the industrious poor, and those whom accident has made so, or sudden distress reduced. The common or bred beggars I leave to others, and to the public provision." Richardson, Clarissa, op.cit., II, p.395.
2. See op.cit., III, pp.103-9.
3. Ibid., III, p.109.

The use of the Scriptures is interesting. Brooke's reference to them is evidently selective, and very often they have been turned to a particular use. The parable of the talents and the wise steward obviously provides the ground-plan of the novel. Clinton also makes a direct reference to it when he learns of Meekly's judicious investment of the £1,400 he lent him in Holland. The money has grown to over £5,000 and Clinton says that 'you have been quite a gospel steward, and returned me my own with most unlooked-for usury.'[1] This reminds us that Meekly was required to execute a bond ('that savage instrument, a bond' as Bage's John Cheslyn in Mount Henneth would call it[2]) when the amount was given him. In this case the bond turns out to be unnecessary, but Harry makes use of the I.O.U. signed by Mr. Niggards, one of the beneficiaries of his charity. Charity, thus, may sometimes require to be backed by legal forms.

We are not sure if all those that Harry freed from the debtors' prison are worthy people, but the discussion between Clement and Clinton on the severity of penalties for the non-payment or delayed payment of debts reveals interesting points. Clinton concedes that if the laws with respect to debtors were less severe, "there would be less credit, and consequently, less dealing, in this, so wonderously wealthy and trading a nation." This would be some advantage, because it would lessen extravagance.[3]

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1. Ibid., V, p.130.
2. BNL, op.cit., IX, p.120.
3. Op.cit., III, pp.246-7.

But a distinction should be made between those who contract loans for useless expenditure and those who contract it for the promotion of general utility. He says:

> Many contract debts, through vanity, or intemperance; or borrow money, or take up goods, with the intention of thieves and robbers, never to make return. When such suffer, they suffer deservedly, in expiation of their guilt. But there are unavoidable damages by water, by fire, the crush of power, oppressive landlords, and more oppressive law-suits, death by cattle, failure of crop, failure of payment in others; with thousands of such like casualties, whereby men may become bankrupt, and yet continue blameless. And, in all such cases, one would think that the present ruin was sufficient calamity, without the exertion of law to make that ruin irreparable.[1]

As the law does not make any such distinction, and as punishment in cases where payment in time has not been possible for reasons beyond the individual's control harms the smooth progress of works of common weal, legislators should take steps to make the life of prisoners 'as little grievous as may be'.[2] Brooke's philanthropic concern with the crying abuses of debtors' prisons has evidently an economic rationale.

There is charity for the sake of charity also, but, as Goodville says to Clement, "it is not he who gives you money, but he who puts you into a way of getting it, that does you a friendship."[3] And this is the crux. Meekly's version of the parable of the good householder (Matt., xx) is patently revealing:

> When the good householder walked out to the market-place, and found labourers loitering there when it was now toward evening, he asked them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

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1. Ibid., III, p.249.
2. Ibid., III, p.250.
3. Ibid., I, p.235.

> And when they answered, "Because no man hath hired or given us employment," he took this for a sufficient apology; he had compassion upon them, and he supplied them with the divinest of all kinds of charity, the means of earning their own Bread.[1]

It is on the ground of this 'divinest of all kinds of charity' that Meekly goes on to acclaim child-labour in Holland.

> [Holland, he says,] is now become as one great and extended metropolis to the universe, and through their canals, as through paved and spacious highways, the world resorts with all its wealth. So encouraged and so incited, neither the lame, nor the blind, nor the maimed sit, unemployed. Every child is taught its trade from the moment it can apply its little hands to a regular motion, and they bring to the parents vast sums, in lieu of an infinite variety of toys and trifles that are dispersed among the idle of the other children of men.[2] (Emphasis mine.)

We may recall that there are, according to Brooke, two methods of procuring sustenance on earth, first by the labour of one's own hands, the second by the employment of the hands of others. Harry's education is not exactly like what is desired of Clement, because he is not to work with his hands but to provide employment to others. To set people on the way of utility, he founds a school for boys and girls where they could be trained to useful crafts. The inception of the idea dates back to an earlier period. In one of his rambles in the villages near London, the jingle of infant voices had struck his ears, and at the ground-floor of a long cottage, he had seen about thirty girls "neatly dressed in a uniform, and all very busily and variously employed, in hacking, carding, knitting, or spinning, or in

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1. Ibid., V, pp.38-9.
2. Ibid., V, pp.43-4. See above, pp.141-3.By 1805, similar words were used as a severe indictment of child labour.

serving at the sampler, or in learning their letter, and so forth." The adjoining house contained about an equal number of boys, most of whom were occupied in learning "the rudiments of several handicrafts", while the rest were busied in "cultivating a back field, intended as a garden for these two seminaries."[1] Harry gets a school of his own on the same plan.

(2)

Two points should be noted about the scheme of benevolence and charity in The Fool of Quality. First, it is made possible by the wealth earned from commercial enterprise (and is possibly an expiation for it). Secondly, it is directed towards setting up people in profitable, productive occupations.

The extent of Clinton's fortune of course may provoke the kind of criticism that the Monthly Review made on at least two occasions in the last decade of the century. While reviewing William Thornborough, The Benevolent Quixote (1791), it ironically remarked that novel-writers were not a niggardly race.[2] Again, while reviewing Parental Duplicity or the Power of Artifice (1797), it commented on the singular power of some characters in the novel of spending their money without diminishing their fortune.[3] The Fool of Quality might have been partly responsible for the excess of later novelists in this respect, but the criticism is not quite

1. Ibid., V, pp.131-2.
2. MR (2nd Series), iv, January-April 1791, p.230.
3. Ibid., xxvi, May-August 1798, p.106.

tenable against it.[1] Two lives have been spent, Golding's and Clinton's, in acquiring the fortune that Harry is unable to exhaust. Given Clinton's antecedents, it should not be difficult to imagine a situation where lots of money can be or is really spent without any visible effect on the fortune, particularly when a regular inflow of dividends is assured. East India merchants, foreign traders of all sorts, and dealers, say, in pills are known to have made very large endowments to public institutions; and it is not surprising that in most of our radical novels the merchant is very often a benevolent man.

The idea that "the best use of fortune is to assist the worthy"[2] is likewise shared by other novelists of our group. As no man is naturally bad, as most people are potentially capable of being engaged in works of social utility, the principle of course has an extensive application. But in its very aims and objects it smacks of a narrow paternalism. Moreover, if giving employment is an act of charity, one can easily evade the need to pay proper wages. Why should the labourer complain? He was after all picked up from the gutter and he is in any case better than he would have been without a job.

(3)

Charity, in Brooke, does not go without faith. When Goodville is collecting funds for a charitable hospital for

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1. Brooke's other novel Juliet Grenville is more open to this criticism.
2. Robert Bage, James Wallace (1788), BNL, op.cit., IX, p.446.

reclaimed fallen women,[1] Harry withdraws his contribution when the scheme is supported by Mr. Mole, an atheist, and beats him up.[2] But this is an extreme case (Harry repents for his impetuous enthusiasm). For, even the mystic divinity of Brooke seems at times to be grounded in the realism of the novel: it has its points of contact with the very worldly objective of a commercial utopia. Man's essential selfishness (a manifestation for Brooke of original sin) constantly stands in the way of achieving a world of peace and plenty, and this barrier, which other novelists of our group would surmount with the help of reason and education, can be got over only with divine interference.

When Meekly expounds his scheme of common weal, he also points out that the only reason this scheme is not being realised is that man is selfish. He says to Harry who is prepared to spend all his father's wealth on the scheme:

> ...though you were master of half the wealth of the people of England, and were willing to employ the whole ..., the people themselves would oppose you in every step you should take. Some would be too proud to aceept a benefit from you. Others would tell you that no man should dare to violate their property with either spade or pickaxe; and others would indict you even for treading on their grounds.

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1. Perhaps not exactly relevant, a passage from Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce, Cambridge 1961, pp.345-6, may still be interesting in the present context: 'The genial and debauched Marquis of Hertford and his genial and debauched son and successor, one or the other the original of Thackeray's Lord Steyne, contributed steadily, as a rule to societies not religious or moral, though like the Regent, his brother York and some other noted performers in the amorous history of the age, they seemed to feel a claim on them of the institutions caring for prostitutes, women with venereal disease, and seduced, pregnant or otherwise unhappy unmarried young women, whether from town or country.'

2. Op.cit., IV, pp.264-7.

> Nothing less than the act of the whole legislature, to whom the people have committed their confluent powers, can avail for an undertaking of such national import.[1]

This is a repudiation of the natural identity of interests, and the passage, as some others in the novel, also implies support for state intervention. But the suggestion is a concrete one. Against this, Clinton's solution is a purely religious, an idealistic one. He makes a distinction between the creature and the Creator. The will of the creature is confined. 'While it is distinct from, and uninformed by the will of God, it cannot possibly act beyond or out of itself; it cannot possibly feel for any thing except itself; it cannot wish any welfare except its own welfare, and this it endeavours to compass by the exertion of all its powers.'[2] This selfishness of the creature begets all kinds of evil - pride, covetousness, envy, hatred, wrath and contention, malevolence and malignity.[3] The problem is the same as Meekly's, but the context, the register is different, and so is the solution. There is nothing the creature could do except wait for God's benediction. When it comes everything would be set right. When 'God is pleased to inform the will of the creature with any measure of his own benign and benevolent will, he steals it sweetly forth in affection to others:[4] Then

> on the grand and final consummation ..., our JESUS will take in hand the resigned cordage of our hearts; he will tune

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1. Ibid., V, p.48.
2. Ibid., V, p.110.
3. Ibid., V, p.110.
4. Ibid., V, p.111.

> them, with so many instruments, to the song of his own sentiments, and will touch them with the finger of his own divine feelings. Then shall the wisdom, the might, and the goodness of our God, become the wisdom, might, and goodness of all his intelligent creatures; the happiness of each shall multiply and overflow in the wishes and participation of the happiness of all.[1] (Emphasis mine.)

Even here, in this hallelujah to God and the Lamb, the utilitarian strain (in the underlined clause) comes in. It is significant that the Earl's final conversion relates to two items of faith: he accepts the superiority of trade and commerce and himself becomes a panegyrist, and he is converted to the spirit of the 'evangel'. The first of these miracles has been effected by Meekly, the second by Clinton. Perhaps there is no essential contradiction in Meekly's and Clinton's positions. Their objectives are identical, but Clinton's reliance on religion becomes a kind of defeatism in the face of that selfishness of man that Meekly too has talked about. The full-blooded economic thesis has been befogged in the mysticism of religion.

It is here that the confusion of perspective comes in - where the connexion between the realistic basis and the ideal superstructure is lost sight of. Brooke's infatuation with religion is in fact sickening from its excess. The Monthly Review, we may recall, was critical of the use of 'such devout expressions as the Son of David, Babe of Bethlehem, and the like.'[2] The situation becomes still worse when we find that Clinton and Harry are frequently identified with God the Father and God the Son.[3]

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1. Ibid., V, p.111.
2. See above p. 151n.
3. See op.cit., III, pp.282, 292; IV, pp.162-3; 194 - to quote only a few random examples.

One does not understand either why Golding should be afraid of not attaining salvation. He has lived a life of charity - a pious, spotless life on the whole. Is this an unconscious fear of having lived the extortioner's life of a Mr. Badman? (Bunyan's influence is writ large on the novel - in the concern with abstract morality values, which Brooke had earlier indulged in his Jack the Giant Killer, and in the frequent use of dialogues on religious and other subjects.) Again one does not understand why Golding, Clinton, Harry, should be punished in the death of their near and dear ones.

Suffering in Brooke is a process of purification. The death of near and dear ones is in most cases the instrument of divine chastisement. Unaccountable, sudden, accidental, death yet seems to have a pattern. Each death is a notation of the spiritual progress that the spared one makes, as it is also another term of suffering, to be followed by some temporary comfort, and so forth, till eventually there is the world of light and salvation. Harry and Clinton are the favoured ones - they have borne the yoke patiently and survived everybody.

But bearing the yoke is not the same as bearing the cross. Harry is equated with Christ, the Babe in the manger, but he never really bears the cross. At times his mode of sharing the suffering of others even seems obnoxious. Grief, humiliation, the whole gamut of human sentiments, find their recompense or reward in money. Perhaps material acquisitions and worldly attachments and involvements are in themselves, according to

Brooke, a mode of bearing the cross. Perhaps the religious sensibility is a form of self-delusion. 'My wealth', says Clinton, 'already overflows, it is my only trouble, my only incumbrance. It claims my attention, indeed, as it is a trust for which I know I am strictly accountable. But I heartily wish that Providence would re-claim the whole to himself, and leave me as one of his mendicants, who daily wait on the hand that supplieth all who seek his kingdom with necessary things.'[1] There is no better way to get round one's conscience than to call one's material possessions a trust and a responsibility from God. One suspects that if Brooke intended to imply the kind of criticism that Bunyan made of Mr. Badman, he has left it to be gathered by vague, inarticulate hints; and that the death of his own children and the resultant suffering and resignation has got into the novel.

One thing is certain. Faith and benevolence are means to an end. By setting up people in useful employment, a flourishing commercial community is established, with a few at the top reaping a rich harvest of dividends. By a make-believe detachment from worldly goods and possessions, a salve to the conscience is provided. Faith and benevolence do imply some qualification of a narrow egoistic world outlook, thus possibly meliorating some of the evil inherent in a system based on possessive individualism. But such an approach has not only its limitations. It also tones down class-antagonisms. It makes the rich reconciled to the

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1. Ibid., V, p.130.

'uneasy', 'tainted' wealth he is master of, and the poor forget his suffering. The religious man of feeling in The Fool of Quality is not in a dichotomous relationship with the man of the world. The man of feeling is what the man of the world should be. Sensibility and religion are ideal components of an era when 'uncoveted' wealth came pouring in. These, together with the reconciliation at the end of the novel between the Earl and the merchant-prince, indicate a stage in the domestication of the picaro - the anarchic, irreverent outcast has been absorbed into the highest echelons of society. The prodigal son, the predatory adventurer that was the merchant, has come home rich and achieved his fulfilment in social recognition.

IX

Conclusion

The Fool of Quality presents an apotheosis of the rich merchant as against the landed nobility. The author has appropriately set his story in the seventeenth century. But he displays, unlike Sir Walter Scott in Peveril of the Peak (1822), little interest in, or knowledge of, the details of seventeenth-century social history - the Civil War parties, their religious alignments, the social forces at work, etc. He gives no indication, for instance, of how the first Earl of Moreland got his rank, whether he was a man enriched by Court favour, or a landowner who had gone in for improved methods, or, like his second son, himself a big merchant.[1]

Even if we let alone Brooke's imperfect understanding of social history, there is an element of complacent smugness, disappointing in the extreme, in his very attitude towards the rich merchant. Fielding, in Jonathan Wild, allotted some share of 'greatness' to the merchant. Brooke, instead, though his division of classes and the basis thereof have much in common with Fielding's,[2] considers the merchant to be the most important class, and is blissfully unaware of what Adam Smith criticised the merchants for when he contemptuously talked of their sophistry and sneaking arts.

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1. Benjamin Disraeli's Sybil (1845), Ch. III, makes interesting reading on the subject.
2. See Jonathan Wild, Works, op.cit., IV, pp.153-4.

As a landowner in Ireland, Brooke was at the opposite pole from the new emerging society in England. He shows no real interest in production. He belonged to a semi-feudal gentry, established by conquest - a class which had a natural affinity with military and imperial service, and contributed a great deal (e.g. the Wellington family) to the conquest of India and all nineteenth-century imperial expansion. Brooke himself had relatives shaking the pagoda tree in India. He upholds naval power and empire, without going into any detail of their seamier sides. He supports the great Chartered Companies, like the East India Company, whose profits depended essentially on monopoly and privileged corporations, without realizing that these were now retarding the growth of industrial capital in Britain. Henry Clinton is a member of the big banking aristocracy, which at the end of the eighteenth century, under William Pitt's régime, was being fused (by the mass creation of peerages) more closely with the leading landowning aristocracy into a combined Tory oligarchy, opposed by the manufacturers and the growing industrial working class. It had always been open to the younger sons of at least the smaller aristocracy, even in the middle ages, to go into large-scale commerce, which was relatively respectable, as <u>production</u> was not. Even in the nineteenth century, the gentry did not much care to intermarry with millowners, as they did with bankers or East India Company directors. Henry started with £12,000, quite a large sum. In the Cromwellian period, his fortune was increased, presumably by the profits of imperialism,

viz., slave-trade, the wars with Holland over the spice-trade monopoly, etc. He has something in him of the Dutch 'Regents'- the big merchants and financiers of Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It should be remembered in this context that, in the eighteenth century, the vast colonial profits from Indonesia were slowing down, not stimulating, the movement towards industrial capitalism that had started earlier in Holland than in England. The country, the most progressive in seventeenth century Europe, was sinking into parasitism on its empire.

Altogether Brooke's schematic fiction of two brothers, landowner and rich merchant, first quarrelling and then reconciled with the blessing of religion, fits in quite well with the rôle of these classes in eighteenth-century social history. They had quarrelled in the Civil War period, and had then combined together, against the two extremes: on the one hand the most backward and feudal part of the old aristocracy, chiefly Roman Catholic, and, on the other, the left wing of the seventeenth-century revolutionary movement, the artisans and urban petty bourgeoisie, chiefly nonconformist. Towards the end of the eighteenth century they were moving closer together, with Evangelicalism helping to unite them. As an Anglo-Irish landowner Brooke was in a peripheral position, somewhat detached from the main solid mass of the English landed gentry, in a more exposed and vulnerable position because of Irish social-political conflicts. He was, therefore, more interested in looking for remedies and nostrums. The real social-political division beginning to open up when The Fool of Quality was written was of a quite different sort than

the one presented by Brooke.

But the novel belongs to the period of the anti-war reaction in Europe, following the destructive Seven Years War, which was to be deepened before long by the experience of the War of American Independence. Brooke reflects the mood in many ways. Even because of his Irish antecedents, he was likely to question, to some extent, the validity or usefulness of imperialist domination. A mediocre, muddled mind, he seems to have received a backwash of ideas from many sources and shows a definite leaning towards pacifist, 'free-trade' views. Piled up on the base of a predominantly conservative philosophy, there is a medley of opinions borrowed from different social regions, including the newer middle class. Thus, his belief in order, propriety, economy, simplicity, pacifism, and his views of education, are clearly stimulated by a shift of opinion towards the new emerging class of manufacturers and industrialists. They also fitted with the current trend among the landowners towards more careful management and attention to profit and loss. Brooke was a small landowner, and needed more income from his property. He could easily sympathize with the businesslike Henry's strictures on his rich brother's carelessness - the cause of the ruin of many aristocratic families.

From this point of view, and remembering that Britain - already basically capitalist before the Industrial Revolution - was not destined to undergo another revolution, as France was, one may think of Brooke's medley of notions and opinions as the symptom of a general social trend towards class collaboration: the

conservative classes moving further towards the outlook and interests of the newer, industrialist bourgeoisie, and the latter on the whole, in spite of many radical moods, accepting the old social-political order; and the two together, with the help of social concessions and religious-political propaganda and occasional repression, keeping the new industrial working class in its place. It is therefore not surprising that Charles Kingsley, writing under the stress of the Chartist conflict, should have been interested in The Fool of Quality as a kind of sermon (like his own Alton Locke) in favour of class reconciliation, with the rich learning to consider the feelings of the poor, and the poor learning patience.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROBERT BAGE AND THE ANTI-BOURGEOIS REACTION?

I

INTRODUCTION

Brooke's is a simplified view of life. It has been remarked that 'The goats [in The Fool of Quality] are jet-black, the lambs snowy white.'[1] This is certainly not true. The Earl of Moreland and his elder son, Richard are anything but jet-black. Brooke does not create characters like Sir Hargrave Polexfen in Sir Charles Grandison or even Lord Winterbottom in Bage's Barham Downs. To the best of his abilities and to the extent it is permissible by the contradiction he is trying to comprehend, he has polished off the distinctions between the two most significant of his characters. This attempt at muting class-antagonisms or at presenting a situation based on concessions is reflected in other spheres. Brooke, for example, can and does indulge in the macabre, as when he shows Henry Clinton sleeping with the dead body of his first wife,[2] but the macabre here is conducive of to pleasurable sensations.[3] Blurred distinctions, say, between class categories or between different shades of emotions like

1. E.A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. 5, 1934, p.115.
2. See The Fool of Quality, op.cit., III, pp.71-5.
3. See ibid., III, p.49: "I love to weep! I joy to grieve! It is my happiness, my delight to have my heart broken to pieces." Also p.71: "There is surely ... a species of pleasure in grief: a kind of soothing and deep delight that arises with the tears which are pushed from the fountain of God in the soul, from the charities and sensibilities of the human soul divine."

pleasure and pain as much indicate a process of simplification at work as does a crude juxtaposition of black and white. In Juliet Grenville (1774) indeed the dykes have all been submerged under the flood of tears. Simplification, however, is basic to the very scheme and pattern of The Fool of Quality. Henry Clinton and Earl Moreland represent social categories. And Brooke's strength lies in his ability to schematise. This schematisation also shows that his commitment to the cause he is upholding, the cause of merchants against that of big landed proprietors and owners of large estates, is naive and uncritical in the extreme;

Brooke's eclectic world outlook incorporates items of faith which were beginning to be acceptable when he wrote the novel. But his categories deal with a situation that had virtually resolved itself by the end of the seventeenth century. The contradiction between the landed aristocracy and the big merchant was perhaps in any event a family affair. It has an added unreality for the second half of the eighteenth century. Brooke seems to bolster up a system that had begun to crumble before the need for freedom of trade and the challenge from industrial capital. Robert Bage (1728-1801), a paper-manufacturer of Quaker background, could hardly approve of naval power, chartered companies and colonial wars. By and large, he represents the outlook of the newer middle classes, but, for a variety of reasons, he also shows symptoms of a romantic reaction to middle class ethics and way of life.

II

The American War of Independence

(1)

When Bage's first novel, Mount Henneth, came out,[1] the American War had deepened the mood of pessimism that followed upon the Seven Years' War. It affected the fortunes of wide sections of the business community and struck a blow to national pride. For the first time in the century, England had to conduct a major military operation without a European ally and found itself in difficulty. The Navy had to work against severe odds. Timber, tar and hemp, essential commodities for ship-building, could no longer be imported from America, and soon the Baltic States, the only other convenient source for the supply of these articles, formed a pact of armed neutrality directed against England. The Mediterranean was closed to British ships. Exports to Spain and her colonies were stopped; trade with Africa and the West Indies very much reduced. As Reginald Coupland says:

> [the heavy losses on the sea] dealt a serious blow to trade and industry at home. There were patches of that artificial prosperity which feeds on war-contracts, but the economic complexion of England as a whole deepened steadily from grey to black. The merchant princes of the City had never known such humiliating anxiety. The safe arrival of any of the ships in which their wealth was invested was a matter for exuberant rejoicing. Their loss was never a

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1. Walter Scott, BNL, Op.cit., IX, xviii, gives 1781 as the date of its publication. History books give the same date. But The Monthly Review, LXVI, 1782, p.130 gives the date as 1782. If we take the latter date as correct, Lord Cornwallis had by then surrendered (October 1781) to George Washington at York Town. Even before that it had become evident that the tide was turning in America's favour.

> surprise. Old-established firms went bankrupt. Rich men were ruined. Leaders of society sank into obscurity. And the whole class of their subordinates inevitably suffered with them.[1]

There was crisis in many British industries, notably in the cotton industry. Unemployment was the immediate result, and the introduction of machinery threatened to make the situation still worse. Horace Walpole, in 1778, writes in one of his letters, 'Distress is already felt; one hears of nothing but of the want of money; one sees it every hour. I sit in my blue window and miss nine in ten of the carriages that used to pass before it. Houses sell for nothing which, two years ago, nabobs would have given lakhs of diamonds for.' Three years later, on a visit to London, he records that 'the distress of the public ... is visible even in this extravagant and thoughtless city. The number of houses to be let in every street, whoever runs may read.'[2] Reginald Coupland goes even so far as to speak of the English defeat as 'the most damaging and humiliating ... in all our records.'[3]

The British economy, then, was in a sad state when Mount Henneth came out. Bage himself was a sufferer. His plan of an iron-manufactory in partnership with Erasmus Darwin had failed by 1780, causing him a loss of about fifteen hundred pounds;[4] and with the

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1. Reginald Coupland, The American Revolution and the British Empire, 1930, pp.7-8.
2. Quoted by Coupland, ibid., p.11.
3. Ibid., p.2.
4. This does not seem to have anything to do with the War, which in some cases gave an impetus to the iron industry (as it did not depend, like the cotton industry, on the large-scale import of some raw material produced abroad), and did not, in general, retard its growth.

outbreak of hostilities, the import of Savannah grass from the colonies had stopped, which harmed his business of paper-manufacture. In the Preface to Mount Henneth, he himself says, though facetiously, that he took to novel-writing as a subsidiary source of income when the American War, among other things, made it difficult for him to meet his financial obligations.[1]

He had, in the circumstances, every reason to disapprove of the American War. In the case of two of his main characters, Henry Cheslyn in Mount Henneth and Henry Osmond in Barham Downs (1784), the War leads to bankruptcy. In 1772, Henry Cheslyn had entered 'into partnership with an American house'; in 1775 he started being embarrassed in his finances and in three years his firm became bankrupt.[2] Henry Osmond first felt the pinch in 1776. One of the reasons was the failure of remittances from abroad; in two years he had to wind up business, pay his debts as best he could and retire to the country.[3] There is no mention here of the American War, but from the date of the commencement and culmination of his troubles, the relevance of the war is self-evident.

There is not much else in Barham Downs on the question,[4] unlike Mount Henneth, where, on this question, Bage seems to be

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1. BNL, op.cit., IX, p.113.
2. Ibid., p.116.
3. Ibid., pp.243-4
4. Except a casual reference to it by Sir Ambrose Archer, 'as we never saw the least prospect of benefit from the American War, we see as little from its continuance,' ibid, p.294.

primarily concerned with the immediate harm done to English trade and commerce and to English people in general. Speaking of 1775, Henry Cheslyn says, 'Every one knows to his sorrow the events that distinguished this fatal year; every one feels the wound given to this country, by its breach with the Colonies.'[1]

In the same novel, in an in-set allegorical tale about two islands, we find a detailed statement of a similar attitude:

> Carthage ...had settled colonies in the Hesperides, which, in time grew to be worth something. Carthage desired to tax these fortunate islands: the fortunate islands did not desire to be taxed. - The marrow of their negotiations may be comprised in the following short dialogue.
>
> C. We are to desire you, gentlemen, to submit patiently and lovingly to a few taxes, which our country will do itself the honour to lay upon yours, as times and occasions may offer.
>
> H. We must beg the favour of you to tax ourselves, as the people of your good country are accustomed to do, whom we are fond of imitating, and of calling our friends and brethren, upon all occasions.
>
> C. To tax yourselves, will not answer our purpose; for how can you be judges of what we want?
>
> H. At least as well as you can be, of what we are able to pay.
>
> C. If you give us no more than you like, that will probably be very little.
>
> H. If you take from us what you please, that will probably be very much.
>
> C. We have laid a heavy load upon ourselves, for your emolument; gratitude ought to induce you to submit to our demands.
>
> H. Honestly, now, did you do this for our sakes, or your own? But be it for ours, we are making your people a large return, by working for them with all our might. The greatest part of the whole profit of our industry has been always yours, permit it to continue so. Turn all our trade into your own harbours, as you are wont. Tax in your own country the commodities you make us buy. But let us be

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1. Ibid., p.116.

favoured with the privilege your people so justly boast of, as their greatest safeguard. Let us give and grant our money.

C. As to the benefit of your trade, it may be something to our people in general; but what is it to the necessities of government? We want a benefit flowing full and fast into the exchequer; we don't understand your round-about way of sending it through the body of the people.

H. We believe it; otherwise you would certainly be content with receiving it, as you now do, in the best manner possible, for the good of the whole.

C. What we have already, we have no occasion to demand. More, gentlemen, more, and by a straightforward road.

H. We cannot consent to it.

C. Then by G - d we will dragoon you, till you do.

H. Pray, gentlemen, consider. Let us beg you to hear what we have to say; for both our sakes, gentlemen.

C. Implicit compliance, unconditional submission, and your money, are the things we want and will have.

H. Win them and wear them.

So Carthage sent out fleets and armies, and spent as much of her own money in five years, as she had expected to get of her colonies in one hundred.[1]

Bage here seems to realize that the American colonies had no obligation to pay taxes levied to meet the expenses of the colonial wars of the century, as they were fought to promote English interests. He also seems to resent with the Americans that 'the greatest part of the whole profit of our industry has been yours.' It is not without reluctance that his spokesman for the colonies concedes the right of the mother country to impose trade-regulations.

But one suspects that Bage is only being wise after the

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1. Ibid., p.126. The Monthly Review, quoted the passage in full as 'a specimen of the Author's sprightly manner of reasoning on a subject which graver politicians have not discussed with more solid argument, in long orations in the house, or in laboured productions from the press.' (LXVI, 1782, p.130).

event, that he blames the policy of the British Government because it has led to a breach with the colonies and thus to a loss of whatever had been pouring into Britain 'in the best manner possible, for the good of the whole.' The old arrangement, he would have us believe not very rightly nor very consistently, was beneficial to both the countries: his spokesman for the colonies pleads that the mother country, 'for both our sakes', should refrain from precipitate measures.

This is not quite compatible with the resentment, though muted, that informs the passage beginning with 'Honestly, now, did you do this for our sakes, or your own?', nor does it agree with the current opinion about mercantilism. Adam Smith had already observed about trade-regulations that 'in the greater part of them, their [merchants'] interest has been more considered than either that of the colonies or that of the mother country.'[1]

A general discussion of the American Revolution is beyond the scope of the present study and the facts are too well known to call for more than a brief comment. The causes of the war were primarily economic: even on the plainest, the question of representation was linked with that of taxation, and when Bage wants for the Americans the same privileges as the English people enjoyed at home, he does not seem to think of abstract, unrelated principles. The right he champions is the right to 'give and grant our money.' Then, conciliation was, at least in the

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1. Wealth of Nations (Bk.IV, Ch. vii, Part II), op.cit., II, p.427.

beginning, the almost universal demand of the opposition to George III's policies with regard to America. The dialogue between Carthage and Hesperides, with the attitude of the colonies of deference towards the mother country, has in fact echoes from, and may have drawn upon, the account of Benjamin Franklin's examination in the House of Commons.[1] Even outside the conservative interests in America which generally sided with the British Government in the fighting and otherwise; there were people there who would have been happy with some kind of adjustment. In the beginning, few, on either side, saw the possibility of or desired complete rupture. Among other reasons, English political institutions were still advanced enough to draw admiration, though by now radicals had also begun to look up to America, and not England, as the paradise of 'bourgeois ideals'.[2]

The idea of reconciliation, however, and the demand that the Americans have the same freedom as the English people at home involved opposition to George III's and Lord North's policies. In England, particularly, it amounted to partisanship with the American cause, though the motives for this over-all, if indirect,

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1. See Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography and Other Writings, Signet Classic, New York 1961, pp.256-260.

2. See in this connexion W. Stark, America: Ideal and Reality: The United States of 1776 in Contemporary European Philosophy, 1947. (A,Cobban's review of the book in The Economic History Review, 2nd Series, I, i, pp.77-8, has also much of interest to say on the subject.) Sylas Neville, an ardent republican who nevertheless delighted in attending functions patronized by the royal family; wrote on 21 Feb. 1767, 'May they [the Irish emigrants to America] flourish and set up in due time a glorious free government in the country which may serve as a retreat to those Free men who may survive the final ruin of Liberty in this country; an event which I am afraid is at no great distance'.

sympathy were of course varied. Although the landed interests also had a stake in the colonies, especially in the western hemisphere where they had at least a few plantations, and although at this stage a clear-cut distinction is not always easy to make between the landed interests and the trading, there was much less cause for the former to support the war. The burden of taxation generally fell on them. The big merchants on the other hand might consider a precipitate policy at least unwise. The Earl of Chatham, for example, opposed the coercion of the Americans on the ground that it must lead to a break-up of the empire. Then there were the enlightened, forward looking sections of the bourgeoisie, with Adam Smith their chief ideologue, who would plead for greater freedom for trade and commerce and hence oppose a policy of increased control.

Bage's attitude here seems to have something in common with the Earl of Chatham's. But we must not forget that Adam Smith was after all, as C.R. Fay calls him, only a 'liberal imperialist'.[1] He indeed said, 'To prohibit a great people ... from making all that they can of every part of their own produce, or from employing their stock and industry in the way that they judge most advantageous to themselves, is a manifest violation of the most sacred rights of mankind', and called the prohibitions 'impertinent badges of slavery.'[2] But he also suggested some kind of a

1. Great Britain from Adam Smith to the Present Day (1928), 5th ed., 1964, p.3.

2. Wealth of Nations (BK.IV, Ch.VII, Part II), op.cit., II, pp.424-5. Note that 'the most sacred rights of mankind' have here, as in Bage, purely economic overtones; also that Smith considered the 'badges of slavery' the more reprehensible because they were harmless and unnecessary. They should be removed not because of the immediate harm they were doing but because 'In a more advanced state [of American economy] they might be really oppressive and insupportable.' (p.425).

'states-general of the British empire' with proportionate representation and taxation from all the member states as a possible solution to the American problem,[1] and said that the Colonies were in a position to pay the taxes, and that it was only fair they 'should contribute towards the discharge of the public debt of Great Britain.'[2] With this last proposition perhaps Bage would not have agreed. But he was acutely aware of the increasing mass of national debt, which had nearly doubled during the War. One of his objections to the War is that England 'had spent as much of her own money in five years, as she had expected to get of her Colonies in one hundred.'

His attitude, at this stage, seems to proceed primarily from the failure of his business, from the immediate harm that an adventurous colonial policy had done to British trade and commerce generally, and from the expensiveness of the war, and not from absolute political principles, or the justice of the American cause. He could not yet have visualized the advantages that American Independence was to bring even to British trade. His annoyance with the unwise policy of the Home Government automatically reflects some sympathy for the Americans. But this sympathy has at best only a negative quality; at worst it is of a doubtful nature. For, William Melton, who had fought on the American side, leaves the New World with the intention of settling in France because, among other things, he was 'disgusted with some of [the] precipitate proceedings' of the Americans.[3]

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1. See ibid., (Bk V, Ch.III), III, p.426.
2. See ibid., (Bk.V, Ch.III), III, p.757.
3. BNL, op.cit., IX, p.193.

(2)

By the beginning of the 'eighties, what with the Wilkes affair and the American problem itself, fundamental political questions had begun to agitate the people's mind.[1] These were sure to make an impact even where considerations of a personal nature enforced no obligation to adopt them. And some of the radicals of the French Revolutionary period in England, Horne Tooke, Richard Price, Tom Paine, to name only three, had their first exercise in politics during this period. Wilkes himself, though he began his career as a politician of the Chatham school, moved far to the left of any of his contemporaries.

But it is only in The Fair Syrian (1787), his third novel, that Bage shows for the first time some sustained awareness of the political implications of American Independence. The opening gives the impression that the novel will be entirely devoted to the American question. But it soon becomes evident that Bage is concerned here, as in his other novels, with one or more love-stories, of equal or only slightly unequal value. Yet the American War and some related problems feature here at some length.

The Marquis de St. Claur, a volunteer with the 'rebels' in America, thinks that the Congress in Philadelphia would be 'celebrated by future Livys, as the ancient preserver of the only storehouse for liberty in the four quarters of the globe'.[2] A

1. The Society for Constitutional Information was founded in 1780. Magna Carta, 'the majesty of the People', and 'America in Arms, Despotism at our feet' were some of the toasts of the annual dinner of the Society in 1782. Vide Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement (1959), 1964, p.115.

2. The Fair Syrian, 1787, I, p.27. See, however, the clause that follows, 'where thirty generations of men, exclusive of accidents, may be furnished with what they want.'

Quaker he meets there makes a long peroration on liberty, says that 'the heads of the Kings and rulers of the old World are worm-eaten',[1] and denounces even the kings of France and Spain who withheld from their own people the freedom which, for reasons of narrow political and military expediency and national self-interest, they helped the Americans to win and preserve.[2]

In the same novel, Captain Amington, writing from America, regrets the 'ardour of youthful hearts' which had induced him to fight as a volunteer on the English side. 'I thought', he says, 'myself a patriot. I pressed forward to the service of my country. Alas! experience, reflection and observation, have taught me, I could not have served it worse. Fatal to half the world would have been the hour in which we had slaved America. - Most fatal to ourselves.'[3]

In Mount Henneth we found Bage bewailing the breach with the Colonies and the abandonment of the old arrangement which he thought was in the interests of both America and England. About five years later we find him acclaiming the American victory and saying that her defeat would have been even more fatal to England. He does not say how the independence of America was beneficial to the mother country. But it is well known that the American Revolution gave an impetus to political radicalism all over Europe, that, as Paul Mantoux says, 'The American War, much more than the writings of Adam Smith and his disciples, made evident the decay

1. Ibid., I, p.28.
2. Ibid., I, p.29.
3. Ibid., I, pp.19-20.

of the old economic policy [mercantilism] and precipitated its ruin,'[1] and that, partly as a consequence of the break-down of the system of trade-regulations, Britain was 'before long ... selling more goods to an independent America than she had ever sold to colonial America'.[2]

(3)

There is a passage in Man as he is (1792) which throws some more light on Bage's attitude to America. In her conversation with Mr. Holford, a Church of England clergyman, Miss Carlill, a pert Quakeress, denies the need for a national religion, and, to prove her point, narrates the story of a French Count's visit to Amsterdam. On his 'guided tour' of the city, accompanied by a burgomaster, he passed many places of worship belonging to different religious sects: Anabaptists, 'very industrious people, and good subjects; Moravians, 'very diligent, quiet, good, orderly sort of people.' He went to twenty different sects in all, and to each the burgomaster gave 'its due praise of industry and obedience to the laws.' On being asked what religion he himself belonged to, he said he was the burgomaster of the city. Miss Carlill goes on to comment that the absence of a national religion in America should be a sure guarantee of her future prosperity.[3]

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1. The Industrial Revolution, op.cit., p.99.
2. Asa Briggs, op.cit., p.18.
3. ~~Ibid~~ op. cit., I, pp.89-90. See also, on political and religious freedom, Hermsprong, III, p.237: 'I imagine they [Americans] owe this/[Contd. on next page

Political freedom, free-trade, and freedom of worship for the small dissenting trader and businessman, to which class Bage belonged, are aspects of the same social spectrum. Industry, quiet, orderliness, diligence, and, not very curiously, obedience to laws, are celebrated here, and different religious sects deserve freedom of worship by virtue of these qualities. Dissenters in England had even greater need of them than the Anglicans, as they had to struggle harder for success. Once the civil and political disabilities they suffered from and the strangle-hold of the old and new aristocracy over the Government were removed, laws were useful insofar as they made possible a smooth conduct of trade and industry. It may be remembered that this neo-Puritanism served a dual purpose. While on the one hand it made for parsimonious living and accumulation of wealth for further investment, it kept under check the mutinous rabble of the working poor. Even Church of England people such as Hannah More, therefore, would urge the cultivation of these qualities.[1]

Meanwhile, Bage here seems to think that by separating the Church and the State, America has created conditions for an open, and therefore advantageous, pursuit of trade and industry, and for

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Contd. from previous page] this [absence of a polite hatred for opinion] to their diversity of religions, which, accustoming them to see differences of opinion in a matter of the greatest importance, disposes them to tolerate it on all subjects, and even to believe it a condition of human nature. Their Government too embraces all sects, and persecutes none...'

1. Puritanism: 'straitened to no single sect, and represented in the Anglican Church hardly, if at all, less fully than in those which afterwards separated from it.' R.H.Tawney, op.cit. p.198.

their rapid development. For this reason she is, like Holland, held up as an example to be followed. Even while the trade-regulations were in force, British colonies were being admired for their prosperity, and the prosperity was attributed, among other things, to their cheap administrative set-up, the measure of freedom they enjoyed, and the absence of a parasitic clergy.[1] Despite the regulations, a lot of contraband trade had been officially tolerated. After the Seven Years War, England took measures to ensure a stringent observance of what had in any case been irksome, and with the fear of French encroachment removed, the colonists could afford to defy the Government in London. The conflict had then to be resolved the difficult way.

(4)

Bage's approach on the American question is motivated by the actual conditions of his own and his country's life at a particular point in history. His approach is anything but sentimental, unlike S.J. Pratt's, whose Emma Corbett: or, the Miseries of Civil War. Founded on some recent circumstances which happened in America (1780) has the American War as its setting. Pratt here has one advantage over Bage: there is hardly any thematic discursiveness in Emma Corbett. While Bage's ideas on the American War, as on other subjects, have to be gleaned from bits scattered over all his work, Pratt is here concerned with nothing but the evocation

1. See, for example, Wealth of Nations (Bk. IV, Ch.VII, Part II), II, pp.409 et.seq.

of pathos and tears. George Washington is commended for his humanity. In his very short appearance in the novel, he is shown weeping over the distresses of Emma Corbett who had risked her life by going to America and travelling from one battlefield to another to find her lover and fiancé, Henry Hammond, fighting on the British side. Washington hears her story, and 'the soldier's cheek was not without the graceful dignity of a tear. "I am not at war with the affections", he said.'[1] Humanity and domestic happiness are the only concerns of Pratt. According to him, war or political bigotry of any sort leads to immense human suffering. 'Curse on the rage of party! Execrated be the tyrannies of War!'[2] cries Emma at one place. It is Emma's father and his determination to help the Americans which comes up for the severest indictment, at least in the early parts of the novel. Pratt's attitude, in fact, is not unlike that of a correspondent in the Anti-Jacobin who narrates at length how the newly-acquired Jacobinical politics of the father and head of a family has led to the neglect of all responsibilities and eventually to a state of utter domestic chaos and unhappiness.[3] Nor is it very different from the attitude of Charles Lucas in The Infernal Quixote where Jacobinical affiliations are treated as a form of quixotism and receive a treatment similar to that of Miss Jellyby and her philanthropy.

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1. Emma Corbett, Dublin 1780, p.236.
2. Ibid., p.214.
3. See Anti-Jacobin, op.cit., No.6, 18 Dec. 1797, pp.44-45.

Bage has his humanitarian and pacifist considerations. He came of Quaker background and retained some sympathy for the sect all his life. He could not approve of wars. In Mount Henneth we have the story of a soldier who had lost his left leg and right arm in North America, in a war caused by tea and taxation. William Melton, in the same novel, could not bear to live in a country which, besides embarking upon a precipitate course of action he did not quite approve of, reminded him of the loss of his two sons and the consequent death of their mother. It is not said what caused the death of his sons but the War may well have been responsible. To cite another example from the same novel, the story of James Foston and his adventures in India where he had fought with Clive and others, underlines the horrors of war and draws attention to the dehumanisation of soldiers. Hermsprong desires that monarchs and statesmen should have 'the tooth-ache during the war; or the head or heart-ache, or any ache capable of reducing them to beings of humanity; or if that is too much to expect, into beings of common sense, and common honesty,'[1] so that they could adopt a sensible attitude towards wars. In the context of the American War the subject is treated at some length in The Fair Syrian. Yet Bage is different from Pratt in that his disapproval of the war with America proceeds not from naive considerations of human misery and domestic unhappiness but from an awareness of the serious political and economic questions involved, though this awareness may sometimes be slip-shod and the motives questionable.

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1. Hermsprong, op.cit., II, p.183.

(5)

To sum up, then, Bage is opposed to the unwise policy of the British Government vis-a-vis America, and supports the 'natural' right of the Americans to dispose of their ware in whatever manner they liked. In the beginning this attitude partakes of a strong regret for the loss of the colonies. Later, however, Bage becomes more committed to the American cause and thinks their independence beneficial even to England. Circumstances warrant such a change in position. But here again Bage's motives are largely economic. America seems to have been a land of political and religious freedom only insofar as this created conditions for an unshackled development of trade and industry.

III

The 'Calculator Universal'

> Tales and little histories, the delight of lads in general, he detested; but over a book of algebra he would pore with all the marks of stupidity, by the hour.
>
> He kept, however, the progress he made in this science to himself; and it was long impossible to judge of his genius or understanding; when they were developed, he came out an astronomer, geometrician, and calculator universal.
>
> Barham Downs, BNL, IX, p.247.

(1)

The supremacy of merchants, of the directors of monopolies, corporations and chartered companies in close link-up with the landed aristocracy was seriously undermined by American Independence. A new class with free trade and free enterprise as its slogans was now beginning to make an impact on the economic scene and to clamour for a say in political matters. While analysing Bage's position on the American question, we have taken note of his growing identification with the demand of his class for political freedom, free trade, and the freedom of worship for the dissenting trader and businessman.

But even after American independence, the set-up in Britain remained generally unchanged. The war with America also highlighted the possibility of large-scale economic crises. Except for a few years after the cessation of hostilities, the prospects of trade (especially for those who had neither much capital nor great influence in the upper circles) remained generally bleak

through the years of the war with the French. It is not surprising that failure of business from one reason or another, such as the unexpected sinking of a cargo ship to or from the colonies, rash speculation, the treachery of unscrupulous partners, etc., frequently feature in the novels of our school as leading to all sorts of complications and misery.[1] 'The prosperity of a merchant,' says Hermsprong, 'is insecure to a proverb.'[2]

Bage, like Brooke, is critical of the pride, foppery and prejudice of birth and rank, of wasteful expenditure on 'gilt coaches and emerald sprigs.'[3] But he has not the same uncritical faith in the ameliorating properties of trade and commerce. Himself a businessman, he was more likely, than Brooke, to suffer from and know of the fluctuations in trade and the sordid tricks of businessmen. Moreover, he was but a small manufacturer, member of a class which still suffered from all sorts of handicaps - a situation which is not particularly conducive to a robust sensibility and a feeling of being at peace with the world.

(2)

Bage's criticism of the spirit of calculus is emphatically underlined by the character of Sir George Osmond in Barham Downs.

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1. For some random instances in Bage, see Man as he is, op.cit., I, pp.134, 148-59., Hermsprong, op.cit., I, p.30.
2. Hermsprong, III, p.192.
3. Mount Henneth, BNL, op.cit., IX, p.116.

He is the elder brother of Henry Osmond, one of the positives in the novel, who retires to the quiet countryside of Barham Downs after the collapse of his business during the American War. Sir George shows no sympathy for Henry. This lack of brotherly feeling is not the result of any pride of rank or any sense of birth-right, but of a calculating spirit. The brothers are so unlike each other that Bage is even inclined to question Locke's theory of how we come by our ideas and Hartley's theory of association. As Henry says, 'organization and temperament are pre-disposing causes of no small moment.'[1] The mechanistic materialism of empirical philosophers would not quite suit Bage's interests.[2] Henry wonders how he and his brother, 'fed upon the same food, viewing the same objects, taught by the same masters, and instructed in the same rudiments, should still form principles, opinions, and habits, as different as two people educated in England or in Turkey could have done.'[3] The contrast between the brothers derives not from different modes of education, but from difference in temperament.[4] And Sir George's temperament

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1. BNL, op.cit., IX, p.247. See in this connexion, Rousseau, New Eloisa, Part V, Letter 3, St. Preux to Lord Edward: 'Apart from the constitution common to the species, each one of us brings with him at birth a temperament peculiar to himself which determines his genius and character, and which we must not change or constrain but form and perfect.'

2. Cf. Bage disparaging the ideas of Condorcet and Helvetius. For the former, Man as he is, I, p.13. Sir Georges Paradyne's generosity does not fit in with 'Condorcet's moral calculations'. For Helvetius, see The Fair Syrian, Dublin 1787, I, pp.117-120.

3. BNL, IX, p.247.

4. The importance of education is not always denied. One of the reasons for the failure of Henry's business was the habits formed between fourteen and eighteen (cf. BNL, IX, p.243); and most of Bage's characters undergo a period of case-hardening before they are accepted as norms. It is one of the difficulties of Bage criticism that he keeps constantly shifting his ground, not in the/[Contd. on next page

exemplifies narrow utilitarianism and preoccupation with financial gain, leading to moral and physical degeneration.

From his childhood, he was 'surly, indocile, and intractable.' He could seldom be got to play with his sister or brother. He disliked Latin, as also tales and little histories 'the delight of lads in general', but was proficient in arithmetic and algebra, and in course of time became an astronomer, geometrician and 'calculator universal.' He liked best to live in town, 'shunned all society, male and female', and spent all his time 'alone in his library, amidst spheres, diagrams and calculations; at the head of this latter class stood Change-Alley transactions, annuities for lives, and bills of mortality.' Successful in his first speculations, he 'acquired a taste for growing immensely rich, and this was accompanied by its usual concomitant, Avarice.' Soon he got into the habit of regular and excessive drinking.[1]

In course of time, George Osmond gets the gout. Of this he is cured when he takes to a different mode of life later in the novel, when he has realized that 'industry begets commerce, commerce begets money, money begets luxury, luxury begets

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Contd. from previous page] the interests of a complex cognizance of points of view, but mostly as a gambit in tortuous comic contortions.

1. BNL, IX, pp.247. One need not try to account for the contradictions in a passage like this, or in Bage generally. One can, for example, wonder whether avarice and drinking are compatible; and Sir George's intractability of temperament was not necessarily a disqualification. But the contradictions or inconsistencies do not disprove our point, which to anticipate it, is that Bage saw the connexion between Science and Change-Alley transactions, and that the two together, and separately, led to the alienation of the individual and his moral degeneration.

licentiousness.'[1] This is more severe and unequivocal, despite its flippant tone, than 'riches produce luxury, ... and luxury, idleness and the gout' in Mount Henneth.[2]

Henry Brooke might have agreed with the last proposition, but he would have completely failed to understand and accept Sir George's longer chain of cause and effect. And while he approved of Henry Clinton's self-imposed rigour in not seeking female companionship during the term of his apprenticeship, Bage, instead, views the incapacity for personal relationships as a symptom of perverseness. Sir George Osmond himself later voices his distrust of science because it prevents the growth of understanding and fellowship between individuals. He thought once that 'no objects, tangible or speculative' were so interesting as 'those which the universe of matter and motion' presented to him. Now he finds pleasure in the company of human beings, Mrs. Wyman, Mrs. Osmond, Lady Archer, etc., and, is glad that he has given up what he calls 'this philosophy for a bear', and that 'the pride of Science has given way to the feelings of nature, and I am perfectly content to be pleased with what pleases people.'[3] 'King Log', as his wife calls him, is as responsible for the failure of his marriage as his wife, Lucy Strode,[4] a primitive, half-baked Becky Sharp with her share of adventures on the Continent.

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1. BNL, IX, p.352.
2. Ibid., p.118.
3. Ibid., p.373.
4. Cf. Ibid., p.260. They are evenly matched in the sharp exchange of words between them.

In Sir George Osmond's character, then, Bage seems to present a critique of aspects of 'utilitarian' thought, and, like Blake, he seems to see the connexion between eighteenth century reason and the 'bourgeois', 'the calculator universal', between arithmetic, algebra, geometry, diagrams, spheres, etc. and 'Change-Alley transactions'.

This surely does not imply any indiscriminate denigration of Science. The Italian Professor M-, in Barham Downs, though he believes in Providence as his English counterpart, Sir George does not,[1] is presented as an ideal scientist, and so is Paracelsus Holman in James Wallace. Bage had scientist and radical friends in Birmingham, and he himself started studying Mathematics at the age of thirty-two. His objection is not to science, but to a narrow view of it, its connexion with profit-making, and to its weakening influence on social and personal affections.

(3)

In The Fair Syrian (1787), Bage's third novel, we have an account of the sordid tricks of businessmen to increase their profit. Mr. Warren, a rich Bristol merchant, had been disliked and forsaken by his relatives, because he had taken to trade. He belonged to a collateral branch of the family, who had also abandoned the father of Miss Warren, the fair Syrian (so called from having lived in the Middle East where her father had business

1. See ibid., p.356.

concerns to look after), because, against their wishes, he had married the destitute orphan of a clergyman, dependent, after her parents' decease, on the mercy of poor and cruel relatives. Old Warren feels some sympathy for the young couple who were, like him, victims of class-prejudice. He sends for them so that he can find out whether they deserve any help, and asks the young man if he is ashamed of a merchant's calling. The young man is not. Old Warren then enumerates the kind of jobs a recruit in business might be required to perform:

> We have a few cargoes now and then, which of themselves would produce us little or no profit - such a trifle as ten per cent, perhaps - but by sundry branches of mercantile address, with a few insignificant mixtures, we find a way to produce twenty. This is what we call the honest mysteries of business....
>
> A private letter arrives of the loss of ship and cargo - post you off to insure. They ask you questions. You answer upon your honour. Your point is to get the policy done. To that end only must all your answers be framed. Truth can't be always awake.
>
> But the principal trial of your fidelity will be in your transaction with the custom-house officers, a set of rascals who are not satisfied with the power of a gentleman's honour. They require oaths. Now an oath, especially a false one, is a very serious thing to some young people - but I hope you are not one of the squeamish tribe.[1]

This is too much for the young man. He is disappointed because he had thought an incorrupted integrity was the basis of mercantile character. His wife supports him in his refusal to have any truck with the old merchant. She is not impressed even

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1. The Fair Syrian, II, pp.26-27.

> in the beginning of the present century, Paul Lamounde was a merchant of some consequence at Liverpool. No longer a Huguenot, but a sound Presbyterian, Paul, the merchant, was a man of strict justice, equally rigid in economy and religion, and knew the full value of faith, justification, ten per cent., and grace.
>
> St. Paul, the Apostle, said, let all you do be done to some great end. The merchant obeyed the precept, and married Miss Clarkson, with 10,000 l; at that time a fortune of some note.[1]

The collocation of faith, justification, ten per cent, and grace suggests the kind of criticism (even of Quakerism) that we generally associate with Max Weber and R.H. Tawney.

On the death of his wife, for a long time, Paul was inconsolable. At the end of a year, however, on inspecting his accounts, he discovered that his wife had spent lots of money on 'life's comforts, its conveniences, and its pleasures,' and realized that 'it was impious to arraign the will of Heaven, and ungrateful to repine at its decrees'. The wife is not without her share of blame, but the husband, who knew 'no account but that of balance', and did nothing but 'hoard and hoard, and care and care', gets the worst of it. He would not provide adequate clothes for his three children, nor for their proper education, until persuaded to do so by their maternal uncle who was rich and whose advice, therefore, could not be ignored.[2]

In the same novel, Signior Udivido, 'a merchant of great eminence'[3] in Spain, wanted his daughter Estella to marry

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1. BNL, IX, p.417.
2. Ibid., pp.417-8.
3. Ibid., p.477.

Signior Praio, 'a gentleman of forty, who had several good qualities, and some not so good, but who was incontestibly the richest man in Valencia.'[1] Unfortunately Estella liked someone else. The father was 'a very honest man, who never broke a promise, or changed an opinion, especially one that had been well-weighed in the scale of profit and loss.'[2] He knew the 'difference in the ages of Signior Praio and his daughter, and he thought he had taken care a proper compensation should be made in rials and maravidies.'[3]

Snobbery is an important reason why the canaille want their children married into the nobility. Bage is critical of both snobbery and mismarriages. But snobbery sometimes takes the form of prudent calculation and this last, with or without snobbery, even as leading to a strict, rigid, colourless life, finds no favour with Bage. Even honesty and truthfulness, when allied to the idea of profit and loss, are far from admirable virtues.

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1. Ibid., p.478.
2. Ibid., p.478. In Bage, one frequently comes across epigrammatic sentences like this. See, for example, i) The remark about Signior Praio, just quoted. ii) Man as he is, I, p.136: 'Indeed it appeared this pair [Sir Simon Haubert and his lady] were so happily suited to each other, that they quitted all society for the dear enjoyment of themselves, and their money'. iii) Hermsprong, III, p.6: Jean Rupre, a rich weaver at Nantes, who forbade his daughter's marriage with Hermsprong's father thus forcing them to elope to America, was 'extravagantly fond of his only child, and also extravagantly fond of his money.' These are only some random examples.
3. BNL, IX, p.478.

(5)

In Man as he is (1792), the chief female characters are both victims of the failure of their fathers' business. Failure of business from one reason or another was bound to create a mood of despondence and a corresponding desire for withdrawal and retirement, a certain disapproval of speculation on the Stock Exchange and elsewhere. Cornelia Colerain, the heroine, suffered from the treachery and presumption of an unscrupulous partner of her father's, though some imprudent transactions made by the father were also responsible for the bankruptcy. The father of Miss Carlill, Cornelia's friend, was a merchant of some note in the city of London and a man of integrity, but he indulged in 'rash ventures' and brought about his ruin, and misery for his wife and daughter.

This obviously has its significance as pointing out the dangers of speculation and as a partial realization that it is common, normal practice even with businessmen of integrity to speculate and to indulge in rash ventures.

There is, however, an incidental dialogue between Sir George, the hero, and Mr. Lindsay, companion-cum-tutor-cum-mentor, which variously helps us understand the position of Bage. On Sir George drawing Lindsay's attention to the current prosperity of England, Lindsay says,

> If ... the increase of printing presses, carvers and gilders, be a proof of the increase of science and of art, you are right. The accommodation of life, meaning, no doubt, down beds and coaches, looking-glasses and gauze, are abundant - too abundant.

> Refinement is progressive; there is somewhere a degree of it, at which, if it would stop, the happiness of a whole people might be the greatest possible and the most permanent. This point ... we have reached, - and passed.[1]

Lindsay does not look back to the days of Henries and Edwards, nor to the days before the Norman Yoke: he would be satisfied if the progress of England had stopped around the beginning of the eighteenth century:

> Before nabobs were - when wealth was more moderate, and more equal; - when coxcombry, now swelled into a deluge, entered the land in a gentle current, capable of being checked in its source by the pen of the poet and the moralist; - before the poor, that tolerably large proportion of the human race, forgot in all our disquisitions, political and moral, whom we despise, and to whom we owe our subsistence, and the gratification of our pride, - had learned, in an ale-house to imitate, at humble distance, the luxury of the tavern; - before this imitation had tainted their - ...[2]

Lindsay's desire that England should have ceased to progress around 1700 is the manifestation of that romantic nostalgia which can withstand everything that does not belong to the present or the immediate past, but it is grounded in, and limited by, his dislike of the big merchants of the eighteenth century, and this dislike is not entirely theoretical.

We have here one Mr. Birimport, a retired East India merchant, who embodies some of the worst features of his class. "In the East", a Mr. Sampson informs us, "he acquired more things than money. A habit of command, which he can scarce remember to lay aside when speaking to free people. An overbearing pride, which renders it necessary to his own happiness, to be always the dictator of the

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1. Man as he is, I, pp.72-73.
2. Ibid., I, pp.73-74.

company".[1] Mrs. Birimport, the sister of Sir George, excuses him by saying, "His caprices are partly the effects of infirmity, and partly of that tyranny which is said to be so easily learned in the East."[2] His domestics are not allowed to take physic 'but by his prescription.'[3] His body is broken down and he suffers from hypochondria.[4] With all his good sense,[5] he is a tyrant of a husband, and keeps devising petty ways and words to hurt his young wife.

Lindsay's observations or Mr. Birimport's character (though one can see Bage making excuses for him, and he is not as bad as Lord Auschamp in Man as he is or Lord Bembridge in The Fair Syrian) fit in with the opinion, fairly widespread, that oriental luxury and oriental modes of government were influencing and corrupting the English character and thus the entire body politic.[6] Such an approach, involving the rejection of luxury as a way of life and the imputation of inefficiency and corruption to the political system, evidently fits in with the needs and aspirations

1. Ibid., II, p.127.
2. Ibid., II, p.134.
3. Ibid., II, p.133.
4. Ibid., II, p.130.
5. Ibid., II, p.134. Mrs. Birimport says, 'His good sense I took for an indication of all the virtues.'
6. 'The riches of Asia have been poured upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connexions, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold have forced their way into Parliament by such a torrent of corruption as no private hereditary fortune could resist'; Thus the Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords, 22 Jan, 1770 (quoted by Coupland, op.cit., p.183), though as Coupland makes it plain, Chatham was a 'mercantilist' by and large.

of the newer middle class, the industrialists, etc.

Bage is here speaking not so much for the sensitive individual, as for his own class. Even the sympathy for the poor, in Lindsay's observation, takes the form of strict injunctions, for example, on temperance. Before this Lindsay has even gone so far as to excuse the lapses of the rich and the great, even to give them some hesitant praise. He says,

> Of the rich and great I am not now speaking; taste and experience are with them in their proper elements, whilst they are contained within the limits of their fortune; their palaces, their gilded ceilings, their lustres, and their girandoles, encourage the arts and reward ingenuity. I stop not here to enquire whether this expense might not be better directed. My censure chiefly applies to the middle ranks. To how many thousands of individuals do these vanities, pursued, prove destructive of tranquility and ruinous to fortune. So parents give their offspring a thousand wants which nature never gave, and exhausts the springs which should be destined to their supply.[1]

It were best if the rich behaved like enlightened economists and put their wealth to proper use. Yet with them taste and expense might be in their proper elements and luxury might be permissible, if these did not set up a bad example. It is particularly the middle ranks and the poor who should confine themselves to the wants 'nature' gave them. Nature surely is the best economist!

Dr. Gordon in Mount Henneth takes a similar position to Lindsay's in Man as he is. He ascribes nine out of ten bankruptcies to 'the prevalence of fashion' to which England owes, among other evils, the Marshalsea.[2] He would not mind if only coxcombs and people of fortune were given to fashionable living,

1. Ibid., I, p.71.
2. BNL, IX, p.188.

but it exasperates him to see tradesmen ruined by this folly, to see all, property or no property, 'swallowed up in the vortex'. If someone is put into a debtors' prison it is his own fault,[1] and, it follows, there would be no prisons if people were not obliged by their exorbitant tastes to borrow. When Dickens wrote of the Marshalsea, he looked at it from the prisoner's point of view; he wanted to expose the inhuman conditions in debtors' prisons. There could be no doubt about where his sympathies lie. Even Brooke has a more open mind on the subject than Bage. It is not that Bage does not approve of enlightened borrowing and lending - even without interest -, borrowing and lending, meant to promote acts of utility or a sensible individual's aspirations. John Cheslyn in Mount Henneth offers money to Tom Sutton (and does not even require a bond), so that the latter can go to India and earn an independent living. We know that the 'religious solidarity' of the dissenting traders in this period, 'symbolized in Quaker meeting house or nonconformist chapel, facilitated not only consciousness of Grace but confident mutual borrowing and lending.'[2] Brooke, like Bage, would have disapproved of borrowing and lending on frivolous grounds, but there is a difference in emphases between the two. While Brooke thought of the punishment for non-payment of debts, or for delay in payment, as severe and as hampering acts of utility; Bage goes off at a tangent when he inveighs against fashion and thinks of it as being chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the existence of debtors' prisons.

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1. Ibid., p.188.
2. Asa Briggs, op.cit., p.27.

To go back, however, while Bage would not approve of the parsimonious practice of a Paul Lamounde who did not give his children proper and adequate clothes, he would nevertheless like people to eschew fashion and cultivate habits of economy. The nabobs are reprehensible characters because they brought back with them a sanction for tyranny and because their luxury set a bad example to the common tradesman and the poor. To the poor, Bage's attitude is not identical with that of an Anglican clergyman like Mr. Holford in Man as he is, who says to Miss Colerain when he goes to inform her of the reports, false and malicious, that had been circulated about her connection with Sir George:

> I am not, madam, a rigid censor of the private failings of human nature; neither am I insensible to the charms of beauty, but I think always, the utmost external decency and decorum ought to be preserved, for the sake of good example to the lower classes.[1]

With Bage it would not be a question of 'external decency and decorum', but he would be as careful about setting a good example to the lower classes.

(6)

From his disapproval of the commercial prosperity of the first half of the eighteenth century, Bage proceeds to issue moral injunctions directed at the middle and lower ranks of society. But this is mixed up, not very incongruously, with a nostalgic longing for the past.

Later in the chapter we shall see a similar duality in

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1. Man as he is, I, p.224.

Hermsprong (1796), this time the co-existence, with a class-ideology, of a desire for happiness from life among unspoiled primitive people in America. Meanwhile we shall only cite from this novel (Bage's last) two passages where commercial prosperity is the subject of discussion.

In one of these, Hermsprong, the hero, says,

> I allow your progressive state ..., and if you will have it, that all is improvement, be it so. You have built cities, no doubt, and filled them full of improvement, if magnificence be improvement; and of poverty also, if poverty is improvement. But our question is happiness, comparative happiness; and until you can trace its dependence upon wealth, it will be in vain for you to boast your riches![1]

This reads like Lindsay's remarks (already quoted) on the same subject, remarks beginning with 'If ... the increase of printing presses, carvers, and gilders', etc. But while Lindsay goes on from this to blame the nabobs and prescribe nostrums, Hermsprong evades the issue by taking cover behind the rather elusive concept of happiness, which is attainable only in a comparative degree.

Hermsprong takes a similar position in a dialogue with Mr. Sumelin, a merchant and one of the very best of his class.

> "Have you in any country seen happiness more diffused than in England?" [Mr. Sumelin to Hermsprong]
>
> "If by happiness you mean money, I think not."
> "Money produces the conveniences of life, and its comforts; these produce happiness."
> "It produces also the pride, the vanity, the parade of life; and these, if I mistake not, produce in their consequences, a tolerable quantity of the anxieties; and anxiety is not happiness."
> "To depreciate money, is to depreciate commerce, its mother; this the English will not bear."
> "I know it well; but I suppose there may be too much even of good things."

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1. Hermsprong, II, pp.19-20.

> "We say, the more commerce, the more prosperity".
> "This is changing the idea. Individual happiness was the question; not national prosperity. Your debts and other blessings, flowing from the best of all possible governments, impose upon you the necessity of being the first workshop of the world. You labour incessantly for happiness. If you find it, it is well. But savages like me, have no idea of the happiness of incessant labour"![1]

It is a real cul de sac. If capitalist development has brought magnificence, it has brought poverty too. If money produces the conveniences of life, it also gives rise to anxieties. National debt imposes the necessity of industrialization, which involves incessant labour. Reliance on the mystic concept of happiness is the only way out and while it is Hermsprong who accuses others of deviating from the question, in fact he himself has been avoiding the main issue; insistence on happiness and on individual happiness at that becomes a mode of evading a serious consideration of problems thrown up by the commercial prosperity of the eighteenth century and later by the (in many ways consequent) need of transforming England into the workshop of the world.

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the American Constitution had proclaimed, were the three most cherished ideals of mankind. That was a departure from the Lockean pre-eminence given to life, liberty and property. But while ideally the concept of happiness was meant for the whole people or was a rejection of the importance attached to property, in fact it became the slogan of a new class. For Bage, one would rather think, it was also a mode of escape, but the possibility of such a development was perhaps inherent in the idea.

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1. Hermsprong, II, pp.161-162.

(7)

Bage belongs to a new generation of businessmen. Henry Osmond's father thought that 'mankind owes its opulence, its refinement, its liberality of sentiment, and all the blessings derived from these rich sources' to 'the exalted character of a merchant.'[1] Such was Henry Brooke's idea in The Fool of Quality, but Henry Osmond does not quite agree with his father. Compared to the clergy, even the philosopher, the merchant may yet have his good points, otherwise, as Henry says, his father had gone too far in ascribing merit to the merchant.[2] Bage himself, we have seen, grew to doubt whether benefits accruing from commerce are any benefits at all.

His criticism of a Paul Lamounde or a Mr. Birimport, then, may imply nothing more than the indictment of the manners of capitalists from an earlier generation, of merchants and directors of chartered companies. And even here Mr. Birimport, for all his cantankerous nature, eventually redeems himself by leaving his property to his wife, though he had been teasing her by threatening that he would not leave her a great more than the marriage settlements.

One of the characters in Man as he is says, 'Philosophy and commerce have transformed that generous loyalty to rank; into attachment to peace, to law, to the general happiness of mankind,'[3] and Bage would agree. His merchants have generally no family

1. Barham Downs, BNL, IX, p.243.
2. Ibid., p.243.
3. Man as he is, IV, p.65.

antecedents like Henry Clinton's and they challenge the social-political pre-eminence of the landed aristocracy. Mr. Birimport disliked Lord Auschamp; and even Sir George Osmond creditably refused to accept dictation from Lord Winterbottom. 'I hate lords,' he says.[1]

It is generally the peers of the realm in Bage who are degenerate beyond redemption. Lord Winterbottom in Barham Downs, Lord Bembridge in The Fair Syrian, Lord Auschamp in Man as he is, and Lord Grondale in Hermsprong all meet an ignominious death. And they are, or have been, time-serving politicians all. Trade, commerce, money had brought in the spirit of 'insubordination' that Matthew Bramble resented and Bage would welcome.

There is, therefore, no real inconsistency in Bage's position if he inveighs against merchants and still betrays some tender feeling for them. He could be sceptical about the advantages of commercial prosperity and would still be prepared to condone and accept it in certain respects. He cannot reject it altogether.

Even apart from the democratic opening out that commerce may have initiated, the accumulation of wealth from trade was a major factor in the rapid industrialization of England. James Foston, a retired East India merchant in Mount Henneth, promotes industries in the utopian colony of Mount Henneth in South Wales. It would be a very rugged, determined radicalism indeed that would refuse to subsist on tainted income. When Tom Sutton decides to go as 'a soldier in the service of his country, a cadet to the East India

1. Cf. Barham Downs, BNL, IX, pp.281-282.

Company,' his sister writes to him:

> Are there not a thousand schemes you might have fallen upon to obtain, in your own country, a free and independent subsistence, but you must fly to foreign climes, to tainted regions, where war and desolation reign, to become an adept in the murder of mankind?

and goes on to eulogize, in preference, a cottager's life.[1] Yet Tom's scheme was approved and financed by John and Henry Cheslyn, two of the 'four select' in the novel.

Bage, then, belongs to a new generation, but not entirely; and, though in his criticism of merchants, etc., he seems to question some of the basic assumptions of a middle class morality, he was himself after all a businessman. Even the worst specimens of the 'bourgeois' mentality, Samuel Sutton and Sir George Osmond, for example, have, therefore, their good points and are eventually reformed. And on the other scale from Sutton and Sir George, there is Mr. Sumelin in Hermsprong. Though the vulgarity of his household, of his wife and daughters (except one), reminds us of the Bennet family in Pride and Prejudice, and he himself has his faults, on the whole he is an enlightened and exemplary figure.[2]

Trade, Sir Walter Scott says, 'did not, in him [Bage], extinguish, or contract, one finer feeling of the soul.'[3] While one may not agree with Sir Walter's prejudice against trade, it should not be difficult to accept his assessment of Bage's character. Bage, we learn from one of his letters to William Hutton, agreed to a reduction in the price of his paper, as it was inferior.

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1. Ibid., p.125.
2. Cf. Hermsprong, I, p.71.
3. BNL, IX, p.xix.

His reason for doing so is simple: he did not want to 'sink a tolerable name into a bad one'.[1] But not all businessmen would show even this prudent consideration for the interests of the consumer, and if the letters to Hutton bore no testimony to Bage's humane and affable nature, he was still at least the ideal businessman. His own example, as also his personal sympathies and involvement, while it could have been the reason why he was quick to notice and stigmatise any deviation from the norm he seems to stipulate and practise, might have provided him with a measure of confidence in the integrity of his class. And, although not all businessmen-manufacturers of this period were like Josiah Wedgwood and Matthew Boulton, Bage obviously was not the only one of his type.

It may well be argued that Bage's criticism of the 'bourgeois' was intended as hardly more than a necessary and desirable corrective. Old Warren is in this respect a highly suggestive character. He is aware of the sordid tricks practised by his fellows in trade, but by drawing our attention to them, he is, by elimination, defining integrity.

Here we may also take note of the last words of advice that James Lamounde, Sr., the younger of the two sons of the elder Paul Lamounde, gave to his son:

> [Your education], my dear James, has been so mixed, that you have learning enough to rank with gentlemen, and the proper elements of mercantile knowledge. With regard to your future avocation I leave you free. You may be a gentleman

1. Ibid., p.xx.

> with an independent fortune; I should rather advise you to be a merchant, and increase it. But do not regard the gain of the profession as your sole inducement. You are affluent; every day presents a benevolent merchant opportunity to benefit some worthy man. Do not withhold the loan from the unfortunate, nor suffer merit to sink under distress.[1] Judge with impartiality, yourself as well as others. You have the proper virtues of youth, its frankness, candour, its generosity. You have its peculiar foibles also, its fire, its impetuosity, its rapid conclusions, its precipitate judgements. Your present temperament uncorrected, your friendship will be enthusiasm, your generosity profusion.[2]

Bage's work may be taken as one long piece of advice like the above - designed to form a particular type of businessman, with the impetuous generosity of spirit, as the potential of wickedness, properly curbed. The enthusiasm and generosity of the young James have to be kept under control just as the possibility of his becoming a gentleman or a mere profiteer has to be prevented.

In fact, it seems, Bage is more concerned with curbing the spirit of generosity. He would like to advance the same moral as that in Liberal Opinions by S.J. Pratt, a 'worthy friend' of William Hutton's.[3] Unlike Harley in The Man of Feeling, Pratt's hero, Benignus, is presented largely from a critical angle. In the preface to the second edition, the author says,

> The adventures of Benignus are not so much recommended as objects of regular imitation, as of general escape. The goodness of that person's heart, and the integrity of his intentions, may safely be proposed as the purest standards; but his passion for travel, the excess of his undistinguishing

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1. A reference, perhaps, to the extensive borrowing and lending that took place among the dissenting traders.
2. James Wallace, BNL, IX, p.421.
3. William Hutton, The Life of William Hutton and the History of the Hutton Family, ed. by Llewellynn Tweitt, 1872, p.282.

> bounty, with the various inconveniences and awkward perplexities arising from thence, are examples rather to terrify than to follow. His unlimited benevolence, so far from promoting, defeats the felicity which would arise from a better directed, and more judicious generosity: for liberality loses its name by rambling into profusion; when the heart indiscreetly gives, without the suffrage of the understanding, though the designs of the heart may be amiable, it ceases, in fact, to be goodness, and is therefore nine times out of ten rewarded by the contempt of economy, the ridicule of importune, and the trick of necessity.
>
> To warn the unwary then; to put simplicity upon guard; to regulate the kindest, noblest passion, and to show the delicate partition, which divides humanity from weakness, and feeling from folly, these memoirs are published; in which (for such purposes) are exhibited scenes of hazard, enterprizes of moment, and a diversity of characters.[1]

Pratt is concerned with elucidating the same idea in Shenstone-Green (1779)[2], a novel that Bage's characters in Mount Henneth have taken their lesson from. That benevolence should be directed by, if it was not exactly a form of, prudence was a common idea. Bage is here merely conforming; and while his characters do practise 'quixotic' benevolence, they are hardly ever cheated. They are not naive, simple men of feeling who might be defrauded of their property by, say, the pretense of poverty. They are soft at heart, but could not be accused of being soft in the head as the hero of William Thornborough, The Benevolent Quixote (1791).[3]

Old Warren, with a rough exterior and a tender heart, illustrates the point. Sir George Osmond, after he is cured of his attachment to money, exemplifies the same traits of character.

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1. S.J. Pratt, Liberal Opinions (1775-6), 1783, I, pp.xiii-xiv.
2. See Shenstone-Green, 1779, I, Ch.1, and p.172.
3. See The Monthly Review (2nd Series), IV (1791), p.229.

He has not, as Annabella Whitaker says, 'that tenderness, that sensibility, that touching softness, which distinguishes his brother [Henry Osmond]; but, under an uncouth appearance, and a seeming roughness of manner, he conceals a manly and generous heart, as ready to reward merit, or relieve distress, as many who would be thought embued with the soul of benevolence.'[1] In James Wallace, Captain Islay and Paul Lamounde, uncle of James Lamounde, Jr., and elder of the two sons of the senior Paul Lamounde, who was a merchant of some eminence at Liverpool in the beginning of the eighteenth century, have both a close family resemblance with Old Warren, and they receive a far more extensive treatment and more directly contribute to the progress of the protagonist's career. They are all three businessmen Matthew Brambles - prickly on the surface, but kind and benevolent at heart, - with the difference that the harsh, rugged outside in their case is not so much a natural aspect as a deliberately worn, artificial mask, a mode of disclaiming softness of all variety. Dr. Gordon in Mount Henneth and Lord Konkeith in The Fair Syrian, both Scotsmen like Captain Islay, have the same general attributes.

Almost all important characters in Bage have their odd,[2] even off-putting idiosyncrasies. These are not only the result of a recognition of individual differences and are not only novelistically interesting: they are also desirable. They add to the essential

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1. Barham Downs, BNL, IX, p.355.
2. See, for example, Hermsprong, I, pp.71-72. Mr. Sumelin was 'a man of integrity, indeed, in his dealings, but insanity in his notions, as wisdom goes now. In short, a very odd man'.

worth of a character. Polish and the external charm of manners, the Chesterfieldean scheme of values, are only aids to or forms of hypocrisy. And the brusqueness of a character like Paul Lamounde is a different thing from the boorishness of Esquire Thurl in the same novel.

This imparts a certain uniformity to the characters of Bage, for in inner worth they must all measure up or grow to the same standard and thus tend to be idealized, just as on the outside they all smack a little of caricature. But the surface ruggedness of a Paul Lamounde, or a Warren, or Mr. Arnold, the Irish Quaker in Barham Downs, the protector of Kitty Ross from an Irish Lord, or even Sir George Osmond in his commendable stand against Lord Winterbottom, also seems to be Bage's mode of asserting his class-pride, the kind of pride that is Mr. Fletcher's or John Halifax's in John Halifax Gentleman. Refusal to conform to upper class manners also implies a rejection of snobbery.

There is, thus, a good case for considering Bage a representative bourgeois author, criticising the section of the bourgeoisie that was declining, while still retaining sympathy for it, and reshaping it in the image of his own class, postulating a normative code of conduct that would suit the new, rising interests. As Miss Burney was trying to reconstruct aristocratic values by creating an idealized character like Lord Orville, Bage was perhaps presenting idealized bourgeois figures as norms to be emulated. But an attempt at idealization shows awareness of a lack somewhere. Bage frequently betrays, in spite of himself, the weakness of his faith in the values of his class.

Paul Lamounde, the uncle of James and Judith Lamounde writes to Captain Islay that James Wallace, on the day of his marriage with Judith

> instead of retiring with his bride to their private apartment, to pray in a family way, leaves her in the midst of a concert, puts on an old great coat, and, with an hundred pounds in his pocket, goes to all the spunging-houses in town, and frees, the birds newly taken, to the number of nineteen.[1]

This reminds us of Harry's wedding-day in The Fool of Quality: Judith Lamounde has her children too as Harry had his. The overdose of tears and religious sanctimoniousness in The Fool of Quality makes the set-up there perhaps more sickening; but the passage from James Wallace, with its concert and the 'old great coat', is no less phoney. It seems that both Brooke and Bage are taking a false position; the benevolence, where it is not a necessary, useful mode of conduct, is a hypothetical superimposition on the real.

But to go on, James Wallace was abused by Paul Lamounde for his 'quixotic' benevolence, and then

> What think you was the whelp's answer? Marry - that he prayed to God like other people, till I taught him this other mode of religion; and then retorted upon me with a late foolish charitable indiscretion of my own, which I thought a profound secret; and which he could have known only in consequence of the same foolish intention.[2]

It seems as though by persistent reiteration Bage would force the businessman into believing that he is a benevolent character and thus, perhaps, into acting like one. A permissible and well-

1. BNL, IX, p.506.
2. BNL, IX, p.506 ii.

intentioned subterfuge - one constantly practises it with children and women(!). But if it is meant for adult, intelligent beings there is only too clear a note of falsity in the above passage. The desperation with which Bage tries to convince himself that the 'bourgeois' is what he is not, the desperation with which he tries to transform him into what he should be, the desperation with which he tries to strike a balance between the ideals of the whole man and the limited aims of bourgeois ethics (and at times he confuses the one with the other), is further brought out by another context in the same novel.

The characters of Paul and his younger brother James Lamounde, sons of the elder Paul, were in many respects different. While Paul was rude and uncouth, James was a sweet young man. Paul was attentive to his work in 'the accompting house', and, constantly immersed in the full routine thereof, he could 'do as much business in one day as James in two.' The latter was brilliant, and 'upon pressing occasions, and in some humours', he 'would get as far in one hour as Paul in three'. Paul's 'clothes cost less, and he saved his pocket-money', while James 'was lavish of shillings,and did not appear to set a proper value even upon crowns'. He had contempt for 'mere money'. Paul thought that 'it is the whole duty of man to buy and sell'; James held that man had other duties as well: 'he has to acquire the virtues which dignify his nature; an universal benevolence; affection which form the happiness of social beings, and a justice that rises and looks down upon the laws'. Paul's answer to this was, 'the justice that soars above

the laws ... is romance. Universal benevolence is romance; and the affections you talk of, meaning, I suppose, the altitudes of love and friendship, the greatest romance of all'.[1]

From a situation like this, Maria Edgeworth would have picked up only such details as would have yielded to a simple and glaring contrast, or she would have added and subtracted till not even a distant similarity between the brothers would be discernible. She would then show one of them continually making an upward progress to, and eventually achieving, moral, material and social recognition, while the other would end up in dependence, misery, crime, squalor.[2] In all probability Paul would have been her favourite, with some of James' qualities grafted on to him. Bage, instead, betrays, initially, some slight preference for James, even for his impatience with the accounting house. Yet, his approach is not any more realistic than Maria Edgeworth's. He is anxious to work out a synthesis between the more rigorously narrow, self-centred aspects of possessive individualism and a more humane, enlightened attitude. Whether this latter makes for any real contrast or merely suggests a better way of doing the same job, whether a synthesis between the desirable values of individualism and its excesses can ever be achieved with infusions of idealism are questions not directly relevant to us. But James does have the rudiments of a more humanistic, democratic approach than his brother.

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1. BNL, IX, pp.418-419.
2. See, for example, two of her moral tales, 'The Manufacturers', and 'The Contrast', both variations on Hogarth's good and bad apprentices.

Yet, and this emphasises the unreality of the compromise in Bage's case, the brothers, despite their apparently 'different and uncorresponding characters', 'had, in the more essential qualities that dignify man, much resemblance'.[1] Even so, while one can still understand James' death-bed advice to his son, it is not quite easy to swallow Paul's liberality (though practised on the sly), after his loud disclaimers against benevolence and affections and justice.

There is this confusion thus. One need hardly say that Bage was no consistent philosopher formulating a well-knit, water-tight ideology for the class he belonged to, or in opposition to it. But, through all his muddle-headedness, and perhaps because of it, we can see here the rudiments of a class ideology as also an opposition to aspects of it.

He cannot altogether shed his bearings. But his criticism of some of the basic assumptions of the ideology and practice of a class of businessmen, as we have seen, is much too insistent, much too far-reaching, much too incisive to be ignored.

Part of this criticism, no doubt, has its origins in Bage's class affiliations, in his desire to prescribe a norm. But it is in the nature of criticism, whatever the intentions and underlying motives, to expose. Bage, however, also seems to realize that nostrums would not help. As he cannot quite see the way out, he leans on concepts like 'individual happiness', and, as we shall see in the next section, he shows a progressive shift towards 'romanticism' perhaps naturally tinctured with a cynical disbelief in amelioration.

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1. BNL, IX, pp.418-419.

IV

The Chosen Few

'Thus good fellowship is to be kept up amongst us, - us, the chosen few, - till time shall be no more'.

William Wyman in Barham Downs, BNL, IX, p.368.

'So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room'.

T.S. Eliot, 'Portrait of a Lady'.

(1)

Quite a few of Bage's friends and contemporaries would have echoed William Wyman's sentiments quoted above. Sick of the life of cities, of visiting and being visited, of tea, chocolate and gossip, Bage finds a refuge in the society and culture of the few. Eliot's problem is somewhat similar, and his solution not much different. He is critical of the vulgar affectation of culture, but nevertheless seeks comfort in the sanctity and autonomy of the elite.[1]

The contexts are different. Europe after the First World War had not much in common with Europe in the later eighteenth century. Moreover, the very idea of the elite, of the chosen few, has its origin in the Protestant ethic of the elect. This fostered, in the enterprising and the successful, a spirit of rigorous self-assertion, and, in those who had failed (but not only in them), a fragile sensibility - and a desire for withdrawal either

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1. See Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948), Ch.II, 'The Class and the Elite', in particular.

into the midst of nature, or into small groups, or into one's own individual self, or into all three. Such withdrawal is no answer to the problems created by the rise of capitalism, and may only be a form of mass neurosis. It even led to cynicism and reaction. But it also provided a psychological safety valve, in some curious way reconciling the individual to the unsatisfactory world around him, and thus inducing, if a conformist, then also a restful and therefore wholesome mood of being at peace with the world.

(2)

What gives unity to Mount Henneth, what materially and significantly links up the lot of the main characters, is the utopian colony in and around the castle of Mount Henneth in South Wales. It is to be peopled by worthy men and women who are to engage in socially useful work. James Foston, a retired East India merchant, has bought the castle and the surrounding estate. According to him, the sociability of human nature consists in 'friendship, esteem, and confidence'. Against the vulgar, fashionable notion that to 'see and to be seen, to visit and to be visited, by all the world' are the constituent principles of social living, and 'fine clothes, cards, tea, coffee, chocolate, and scandal' are the requisites, he holds that 'it would be for the good of the species, if it could be taught to associate, rather than to herd.'[1]

1. BNL, IX, p.224.

It is to promote 'association' that James Foston founds his colony, admission to which is limited to those who fulfil a set of qualifications.[1] Bage takes this precaution because a similar project in S.J. Pratt's Shenstone Green: or, the New Paradise Lost: being a History of Human Heart (1779) had to be abandoned as a failure when the most vicious of mankind managed to be admitted. Pratt himself had got his idea from a passage in William Shenstone:

> Had I a fortune of eight or ten thousand pounds a year, I would methinks make myself a neighbourhood. I would first build a village with a church, and people it with inhabitants of some branch of trade that was suitable to the country round. I would then, at proper distances, erect a number of genteel boxes of about a thousand pounds a piece, and amuse myself with giving them all the advantages they could receive from taste. These would I people with a select number of well chosen friends, assigning to each annually the sum of two hundred pounds for life. The salary should be irrevocable, in order to give them independency. The house, of a more precarious tenure, that, in cases of ingratitude, I might introduce another inhabitant. - How plausible however this may appear in speculation, perhaps a very natural and lively novel might be founded upon the inconvenient consequences of it, when put in execution.[2]

To warn the reader against the 'inconvenient consequences' of a plan like Shenstone's is Pratt's object in writing his novel. The first sentence of the passage is quoted as motto on the title-page and Sir Benjamin Beauchamp, the fictional projector of the scheme, embarks upon executing it when on a particularly romantic evening his daughter, Matilda, reads the passage aloud to him. Unfortunately she stops short of the last sentence.[3] The colony they establish is named after their favourite author, some other of whose remarks

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1. See BNL, IX, p.224.
2. William Shenstone, Works, 1773, II, pp.141-142.
3. See Shenstone Green, 1779, I, pp.17-19.

may usefully be cited:

> I feel an avarice of social pleasure, which produces only mortification. I never see a town or city in a map, but I figure to myself many agreeable persons in it, with whom I could wish to be acquainted.[1]
>
> I do not so much want to avoid being cheated, as to afford the expense of being so: the generality of mankind being seldom in good humour but whilst they are imposing upon you in some shape or other.[2]

The second of these two passages, though it is not one of the passages read aloud by Matilda Beauchamp, could have provided father and daughter with a much better sanction for their folly. The scheme fails because the unworthy characters who inhabit the Green take advantage of Sir Benjamin's softness of head and heart, and begin to indulge in practices like horse-racing, cock-fighting, duelling, gambling, etc., and because human nature is what it is.

The founders of the colony at Mount Henneth have learnt their lesson from Sir Benjamin's failure,[3] and they take care that their utopian set-up is not over-run by the scum of humanity and by people who are easy victims of their passion. But the caution proves restrictive. Only about a dozen people are found to be qualified for admission.

Love and friendship, identical interests and opinions form the basis of their union; happiness is its objective, The people here are 'associated together for no other purpose on earth ... but to sow the seed of happiness on our own ground, and diffuse the

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1. Op.cit., pp.138-139. (Quoted by Pratt, as read aloud by Matilda, Shenstone Green, I, p.16)
2. Ibid., pp.140-141. Also see, p.141, 'Egotism' No.XXI.
3. See, BNL, IX, p.224.

plant around us, as far as we are able'. Further, 'our pursuit is happiness'.[1]

Now happiness may be elusive, yet, for Bage, the mode of achieving it is not altogether so. 'In the first place, we have four thousand acres to cultivate, and cause to be cultivated. We have houses to build, and the little village of Henneth to make into a town'.[2] Hugh Griffiths, a cobbler who had been ruined from snobbery and the acquired tastes of his wife and daughters, and is eventually rescued by James Foston to be set up at Mount Henneth, thought it was impossible 'a man should be happy who had nothing to do.' 'When he wore a tambour waistcoat,[3] and indulged himself in the noble employment of lounging; my heart, says he, was as heavy as lead. But when he was ruined, and had betaken himself again to the awl and strap, his heart was as light as a feather.'[4]

This postulatum granted, of work being necessary to happiness, James Foston proposed that members of his ideal community should be men of business, science, and pleasure. About science and pleasure, Bage has not much to say. Everybody is free to study science 'not as dilettanti, but as men in earnest to extend its boundaries'. The article of pleasure is left entirely (and

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1. Ibid., p.238 i.
2. Ibid., p.238. Also see, p.218 - 'and as you, Julia, are determined to make this village a town'.
3. The tambour waistcoat has been earlier likened to the poisened shirt of Hercules (Ibid., p.187). The story of the poisoned shirt of Hercules is one of the fables narrated by Henry Clinton to his nephew: it induced the latter to tear his fine coat into shreds.
4. Ibid., p.238.

facetiously) to women. Manufacture and commerce are to be the main occupations, that is, 'commerce when ministers will permit'. Some of the inhabitants of the colony would engage in ship-building, giving employment, in two years, to about one hundred people, and creating a market for timber. Dr. Gordon and John Cheslyn, whose principal study had been medicine and law respectively, would now primarily concentrate their energies on establishing a linen-manufactory and 'a dome for making glass-bottle'. All these occupations are forms of association.[1]

But they are meant for the patriarchs. The minor folk, who have been rescued by the benevolence of the main characters and are not so rich and enlightened, are set up as milliner, dress-maker, carpenter, cobbler, keeper of a cheese and bacon shop. etc.[2] It is by giving employment that the man of wealth purchases felicity for others, and himself.

We have here a two-tier system as in Brooke: there are those who provide employment, and those who work with their own hands. But while in Brooke we have a feeling that at best he thinks of promoting cottage industries and that Henry Clinton was only a financier and merchant, in Bage we have the industrialists and manufacturers holding the centre of the stage at Mount Henneth. James Foston is not content with the dividends of his investments: he must also promote industries like ship-building, glass-blowing, textile manufacture.

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1. See ibid., pp.238-239.
2. Ibid., p.218.

Yet, while in one direction we notice in Bage some clarity of perspective, a sense of topical realism, there is at the same time a certain withdrawal. Brooke's universal cosmopolitan scale of faith has been reduced to much smaller dimensions: what was good for the whole world, or at least for Britain, can here be practised only in a small colony. The loss of America, the break-up of the first empire, has perhaps inevitably contracted the utopian vision that was Brooke's. Moreover, the American War had exposed the fallacy of state regulations. Taxes and the customs and excise duties were a perpetual bugbear to Bage. Even at Mount Henneth commerce could flourish only if ministers of state and their authority did not interpose. Perhaps the remoteness from London provides a psychological defence mechanism. By transposing industrial projects to an obscure countryside, overlooking the Atlantic, Bage is as it were outwitting the state machinery.

The point of the colony at Mount Henneth, then, is its commercial and industrial character and that it is peopled by the select few, by men and women whose beauty lies in the excellence of their mind, people who are 'accompanied by every virtue,'[1] and that it is far from the din and bustle of London. When Dr. Gordon first makes known his decision to settle at Mount Henneth, he says that he may be eaten by rats, 'if I don't leave this fine air of London, and all the pleasures thereof, and bury myself alive in the

1. Ibid., p.236.

smoke, and dust, and noise and hurry, of a Welch mountain'.[1]

Bage does not seem to realize that by turning the village of Henneth into a town, James Foston and company would only be creating conditions from which Dr. Gordon is trying to escape. But if in Mount Henneth, the desire for the romantic insularity of the enlightened individual, or a group of the elite, occurs conjointly with a desire for the promotion of industrial projects, Barham Downs has nothing of the latter.

(3)

Barham Downs opens with a discussion of the relative merits of a retired life and a life of active participation in human affairs. After the failure of his business, Henry Osmond buries himself in the quiet countryside of Barham Downs. William Wyman, his lawyer friend, urges him to return to London and engage in some form of human activity. In the beginning Bage seems to side with Wyman. Henry falls in love with Annabella Whitaker and, thus, becomes, in a way, socially oriented. After being forced to fight a duel, he goes to the Continent and once again tries to live in the idyllic world of nature. But he soon discovers that there is no escape. Circumstances oblige him to exert himself and free Annabella who has been trepanned by Lord Winterbottom into going to Italy where she has been kept under close guard in a country-house.

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1. Ibid., p.219.

Utility is here adjudged in terms of virtuous deeds. There is no mention of work in the crude sense as a necessary factor in human happiness, and no mention of commercial and industrial ventures as in Mount Henneth. It is a community of enlightened, sensible persons, inhabiting Barham Downs, living in a world of abstractions, that emerges as the norm even more clearly than in the first novel. At Barham Downs one can find them 'all of a heap together': 'Beauty without pride; generosity without ostentation; dignity without ceremony; and honour without folly.'[1] It is in 'domesticism' that the happiness of the Barham Downs élite lies, and they have all 'only one soul'.[2]

This shift towards the vague, the further contraction of Bage's ideals, the reliance on abstract values without any material adjuncts, has been occasioned, as we shall see, by a sense of being at odds with the world.

Towards the end in Barham Downs, there is an interesting dialogue between Sir George Osmond and his sister. Sir George has been reconciled to Henry and has got rid of his calculating meanness, and acquired the younger brother's generosity of spirit. Lady Conollan, his sister, urges him to ignore Lady Osmond's escapades on the Continent and to admit her into the house. When he asks what would be gained by this, Lady Conollan replies, 'The beau monde won't laugh at you'. When he asks 'if marriage as a formal screen for libertinism was calculated for the good of society', she says, 'Certainly, Sir George, for the society of ton;

1. Ibid., p.372.
2. Ibid., p.373.

as to the canaille, if it does not suit them, they have nothing to do but let it alone'.[1]

The world of ton and the world of canaille stand opposed to each other, but the 'I', the individual self, also finds itself pitted against the world. Annabella Whitaker writes to her sister from Italy describing a conversation with Henry Osmond:

> The world would never find in its heart to speak well of a person situated as I had been,
>
> He replied, that the world, to be sure, was a wise personage, its judgments always formed upon the best grounds, and its conclusions charitable. And what, Annabella, can it say on the present occasion?
>
> That I have been a month in the same house with Lord Winterbottom, a gentleman of gallantry and enterprize, and that to come out thence with untainted honour, bordered on the miraculous.
>
> But I, who know the miracle has been performed -
>
> The world, Mr. Osmond, will not applaud your easy faith -
>
> The world and I, Miss Whitaker, have differed in opinion so much; and so often, that I have had the presumption to make it a rule to be guided by my own understanding; and this is a case in which my understanding approves what my heart dictates.[2]

In his essay on 'Clarissa Harlow and Her Times', Christopher Hill points out that the 'abstraction of the individual from society' as in Clarissa, was 'an essential part of the Puritan tradition', and suggests a link between 'the Puritan individualism of Milton, Bunyan, and their successors' and 'the romanticism of the French revolutionary epoch, which posed the individual against society, no longer merely separated him from it'.[3] Henry Osmond's

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1. Ibid., p.370.
2. Ibid., p.355 ii.
3. Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century (1958), Mercury Paperbacks, 1965, p.382.

final observation in the above dialogue evidently belongs to the later epoch.

Now, the feeling of the individual being at odds with the world (and the world in this sense is in Bage as much the world of canaille as the world of ton), leads to a desire for retirement in quiet countryside, or for individual companionships. On hearing the story of Kitty Ross, who is the victim of an Irish gentleman's lax morals as well as of a lawyer's chicanery, William Wyman admits with Henry Osmond that 'Peace and cottage are preferable to plague and a palace.'[1] Or earlier still, on discovering how two parties in a business agreement had each tried to cheat the other, he says, 'ONE SENSIBLE FRIEND is here the pearl above all price.'[2]

Henry's own initial retirement had come after the failure of his business. He was not as attentive to his calling as he should have been. 'Neither my temper, nor the habits contracted from fourteen to eighteen, were fitted to encounter the approaching evils'. He used 'to relieve the fatigues of business by a few pages of Virgil or Horace; and too often when I ought to have been answering foreign correspondents in my comptoir, I was in my secret cabinet, deeply engaged in the guilty coinage of a stanza, an elegy, or an ode.'[3] Against Sir George Osmond's infatuation with arithmetic, algebra, etc., we have Henry's sneaking refuge in poetry.

1. BNL, IX, p.252.
2. Ibid., p.246.
3. Ibid., p.243.

The failure of his business may be partly accountable by his negligence of duty, and his faulty training between fourteen and eighteen, also by his quixotic benevolence in giving money to Lucy Strode and to his sister to facilitate her marriage with Lord Conollan. Yet he could have done nothing about the failure of remittance from abroad; and, more important, Bage is in full sympathy with Henry's disposition. While Brooke would have descended heavily upon Henry for his negligence of duty, Bage seems to dislike the cramping atmosphere of a counting-house. The spirit of calculus is a negation of the man of feeling's natural benevolence, and the sensitive individual's desire for a life of mental culture, of his longing for the freedom of self-realization in art. We may recall in this connexion how Wilhelm Meister, not very well-disposed to the dull routine of his father's business-house, seeks in the theatre a safe sanctuary and a wholesome alternative.[1] Henry Osmond's love of Virgil or Horace, and his 'guilty coinage of a stanza' etc. is a manifestation of the same spirit as informs Goethe's hero.

But while for Henry Mackenzie the choice between the man of feeling and the man of the world was a simple and easy one, for Robert Bage it does not seem to have been so. The Henry Osmond type of initial retirement and misanthropy is not the norm for the author, nor the George Osmond type of isolation. Eventually, they are both reconciled to the world: one gives up his misanthropy,

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1. See in this connexion W.H. Bruford, Culture and Society in Classical Weimar, Cambridge 1962, pp.255-6.

the other what he calls 'this philosophy for a bear'. But the community they are reconciled to is a special one - a society of the few. Towards the end of the novel Wyman writes to his wife, 'his [Sir George's] solitary propensities have wholly given way to the love of society; but it is to the society of our little circle only'. And just a few lines above occurs the sentence we have quoted at the head of this section: 'Thus good fellowship is to be kept up amongst us - us, the chosen few, - till time shall be no more.'[1] The chosen few - till in Hermsprong, Bage's last novel, all attention is centred on a single individual, the hero, a type of the noble savage, who is frankly acknowledged in the subtitle (Man as he is not) to be a hypothetical figure.

(4)

The Fair Syrian, in title though not in substance, shows a shift to the exotic. The exotic in the title may be a mere artifice, perhaps a device to promote the sale of the book. For, there is nothing very exotic about Miss Warren, the heroine, except that her father was a businessman in Syria where she was brought up, and that her story, before her arrival in Ireland, has elements of an 'oriental' adventure - with her passage as slave from one harem to another, from all of which she comes out unscathed.

The novels of Bage have almost all of them a fair sprinkling of kidnapping, threatened rape, sea piracy, dispersal of events

1. BNL, IX, p.368.

over a huge area comprising continents, etc. Their material is not very different from that of the common novels of the period. Even of 'oriental' adventure, Mount Henneth provides us with a nice specimen in James Foston's story of his sojourn in India. It has all the ingredients which, at least atmospherewise, make up a Wilkie Collins in The Moonstone, or a Kipling.

The Fair Syrian, then, in spite of its title, is no more and no less of a romance than any other novel of Bage, and narrates in the main two love-stories: of Sir John Amington and Miss Warren and of the Marquis de la Claur and Miss Clare. In fact, all Bage novels are resolvable into one or more love-stories, and a remark of Sir John Amington's helps us understand why it is so:

> My temper ... is formed to be happy, not in the glare of public, but in the shade of private life. Some happiness I must draw from the cultivation of science; some, from the intercourse of worthy friends, with whom I can form cordial attachments; but my supreme felicity must arise from a wife, whose habits are domestic, whose understanding is cultivated, and whose spirit is as quiet as my own.[1]

Domestic felicity with a wife 'whose understanding is cultivated and whose spirit is ... quiet;' and 'the shade of private life' which is not to be marred by the glare of (to quote a well-known phrase from George Eliot) 'a wider public life'. Some 'worthy friends' may be required, along with the wife, to make the shady dreamworld more pleasant. Science and philosophy would not be much help, and as Sir John elsewhere points out, they have to go with social affections.[2] Social affections, however, do not seem to go beyond the fashionable concepts of love and friendship; they mean much less than a sense of community with the society at large.

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1. The Fair Syrian, I, pp.163-164.
2. Ibid., II, p.313.

Honoria Warren says to Lady Bembridge, Sir John's sister, 'My hopes are to live happy in the midst of a small, a very small circle of friends; Miss Clare and yourself form half the circle at least.'[1]

Miss Warren's arithmetic is a little faulty since her calculation is premature. For eventually the group includes five others, - Sir John Amington, Marquis de la Claur, Lord Konkeith, Lord Belmour, and Miss Warren's father who is discovered in and rescued from the Seven Towers in Constantinople. But it is still a small group and felicity is achieved for it and through it. And such is the happiness of this group that Mr. Warren says towards the end of the novel, 'I am not able to figure to myself ... a state of more perfect enjoyment ... we shall [now] trade industriously for those sublime pleasures of the soul, which pleases [sic.] the more they are remembered.'[2]

The 'sublime pleasures of the soul' - but the words in 'trade industriously' and the collocation are suspect: they belong to a different register. Bage's vocabulary often betrays his vocation. A particularly extreme example of the use of mercantile phraseology in contexts which do not necessarily demand it is provided by Paul Lamounde when he talks of the odds involved in marriage. "I might have", he says, "had a cargo that would not have paid prime cost, freight and insurance; and if it had been

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1. Ibid., II, p.244.
2. Ibid., II, p.319.

musty, I could not have thrown it overboard."[1] It is not only as characteristic speech that Bage uses such language. For that matter, the style of the letters in his novels (four of which are epistolary) as of the conversations has a certain uniformity, consequent upon the uniformity in his characters, and it frequently betrays the hand of the author.

Bage, then, even while he talks of 'the sublime pleasures of the soul', betrays his class. (Or is 'the sublime pleasures of the soul' itself a middle class notion?). He is not a completely liberated romanticist. His 'sublime pleasures' exist not exactly in a rarefied, etherealized, never-to-be world (though there is a strong tendency towards it): they accrue from domesticity, from work, and not from the complete freedom of the individual, not from flights, real or imaginary, into a world of no responsibilities and no sanctions, except those of emotions.

Bage's attitude is perhaps very akin to the purely romantic, but he stays short of taking the complete plunge. The Marquis de la Claur makes an interesting observation on human nature:

> Man to be sure is a god-like animal, but he has one dog-like property, that of eating his own mess, bones and all, hiding the overplus if any; snarling, all the while; and sometimes biting the poor hungry devils who dare to look up at him with an eye of humble desire. This villainous propensity might be corrected, if every man would undertake his own cure, instead of his neighbours.[2]

The disapproval of 'what man has made of man', of man as he is, of things as they are, was one of the commonest items of faith in the

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1. James Wallace, BNL, IX, p.412. See also the lines that follow the last passage quoted from The Fair Syrian.
2. The Fair Syrian, II, pp.322-323.

romantic creed. One recalls the motto on the title-page of Godwin's Caleb Williams, or, Things as they are:

> Amidst the woods the leopard knows his kind;
> The tyger preys not on the tyger brood:
> Man only is the common foe of man.

The Marquis in Bage does not go so far as to concede superiority to the animal kind. Therefore, it is the assumption of human responsibility that he poses as an alternative to man's possessiveness, that he prescribes as a cure. From the notion of the individual as an island, as a self-sufficient quantity, he proceeds to enunciate how he would do everything possible to ameliorate the condition of peasants on his estate in France, thus finding employment enough 'to drive through life', without Ennui, 'that cruel scourge of mankind.'[1]

We are here in the world of Mount Henneth where work was necessary for happiness and the Marquis is evidently trying to measure up to something like the stipulation which admitted to James Foston's Colony 'Any man of wealth, who will spend a moiety of his revenue, in the purchase of felicity for others.'[2] It seems that the pure culture of the enlightened, sensible, chosen few, mostly well-to-do, and the ideals of the bourgeois are after all not diametrically opposed extremes between which a compromise would be impossible to effect. In Barham Downs Bage saw a greater divergence between the two positions than he does in The Fair Syrian.

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1. The Fair Syrian, II, pp.322-323.
2. BNL, IX, p.224.

(5)

In James Wallace, more transparently and consistently than in any other of his novels, Bage is concerned with upholding bourgeois figures and values. The novel opens with Parcelus Holman urging on James Wallace, as Wyman had urged on Henry Osmond in Barham Downs, to give up his gloomy, potentially misanthropic, despondence of the world. As Wyman was the right kind of lawyer, Parcelsus Holman is the right kind of scientist. But while in Barham Downs, Henry ends up reinforcing his retirement, though on a slightly different plane than his initial one, in James Wallace felicity is found, not in a distant Welsh port or in the countryside, but around the household of a Liverpool businessman.

Yet, even here, James Lamounde, the young hopeful of the family, combines with his not altogether unwholesome desire for pleasure a certain generosity of spirit and even a distaste for business. Benevolence, charity, generosity, liberality, etc. were indeed virtues that the enlightened capitalist found useful. As Sir Lewis Namier says,

> The self-restraint and conscious rectitude[1] of a neo-puritanism, 'undemonstrative, gentlemanlike and reasonable', had to be superimposed on the curious, voracious, acquisitive, utterly egotistic, and amoral energy of the eighteenth century, before the Englishman could change from a rover into a ruler.[2]

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1. See Bage's characterization of Hermsprong: 'a spirit of undeviating rectitude, which spurns at everything mean and selfish - an unruffled sweetness of temper, and a soul of benevolence'. Hermsprong, II, p.168,(See also II, pp.52-53. Phrases like 'manly spirit of conscious rectitude', 'the spirit of conscious truth', 'the spirit of conscious justice': these are all attributes of Hermsprong.)

2. England in the Age of American Revolution (1930), 2nd ed., Papermac, 1961, pp.17-18.

But Bage goes even so far as to wink at James Lamounde's desire for pleasure, and his grandfather's stringency in the upbringing of his children, we have seen, is not looked upon with favour. Moreover, the qualities which helped the eighteenth-century Englishman to lay the foundations of an Imperial Britain could also transcend the immediate, narrow ends of business. Individualism did in fact found one of its manifestations in a brittle, fragile sensibility, which, though romantic and ineffective, still presented a critique of market society where, to quote Professor C.B. MacPherson, 'The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself', where 'free equal individuals' are related to each other, as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise', and where all that matters is 'relations of exchange between [these] proprietors.'[1]

Bage, then, even while building up a norm for the bourgeois, seems to be upholding values that may be subversive in certain respects. It was a virtually impossible task to build up a standard of individual worth and responsibility within the frame of capitalist social relations. And perhaps it is a partial awareness of the impossibility of the task which sends Bage off at an idealistic tangent.

In this he was not at all untypical. During this period, the aversion to aspects of money economy, to bourgeois-industrial development, found expression in idealistic, patch-work reconstruction,

1. The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke, Oxford, 1962, p.3.

and/or in romanticism, of varying degree of purity or alloy, and, though these could not offer any practical, meaningful alternative to what they tended to reject, they nevertheless fostered a mood of rebellion. Perhaps it was still too early for a real, socialist alternative, just as it was too late, in England, for a full-blooded bourgeois revolution of the type experienced in France.

(6)

Man as he is, unlike Bage's earlier novels, has a well defined central thesis stated in the 'Exordium':

> That a deviation from virtue is a deviation from happiness, divines have always taught; yet men will not believe; for there are still deviations from virtue. As far as my own experience reaches, I can aver the truth of this first of moral maxims which cannot be too often inculcated. I have friends who deny its universality. I have others who are assured of it; and, who, for the benefit of the universe, have put into my hands the papers, whence I have extracted the following true history .....[1]

The novel thus purports to show that a deviation from virtue is a deviation from happiness, and that, conversely, the acquisition of virtue is the acquisition of happiness. It traces the progress of Sir George Paradyne, the hero, from a not so virtuous position to one more so. Sir George succeeds to the family estate and title after the death of his father and elder brothers. When the novel opens Sir George is a minor, obliged to end his career at one of the Universities, and not quite free from 'the pride of wealth and family'.[2] But he is independent enough in his views to take a

1. Man as he is, I, p.VII.
2. Ibid., II, p.66.

stand against his mother and her brother Lord Auschamp, and refuses to be a political pawn in the latter's hand. He has also 'just experience enough to desire to take cautions against the follies of the age, and my own.'[1] Mr. Lindsay whom Sir George picks up, despite opposition from mother and uncle, as guide-cum-friend for the projected tour of the Continent, says at the very outset, "It does not appear to me that you want a tutor",[2] and he is largely correct. But every individual, particularly an impulsive young man of family who is his own master and the master of a large fortune, needs to learn to govern himself, and to be seasoned by experience. Towards the end of the novel, in the fourth and last volume, Mr. Bardoe who takes up the 'mentorship' where Lindsay virtually gives it up in despair, says to Sir George, "It is time ... that you should begin to learn experience, either from yourself or others."[3]

Bage is aware that he is writing, in certain respects, a Bildungsroman. When he compares Lindsay to Minerva, Miss Colerain to Juno and Lady Ann Brixworth, a rich independent heiress and lady of ton, to Circe,[4] he is obviously thinking of Telemachus as a model. His hero, like Fénélon's, passes through a variety of experience; he is sometimes completely though not irrevocably lost and is then rescued and set on the right track by the helpful agency

1. Ibid., I, p.18.
2. Ibid., I, p.21.
3. Ibid., IV, pp.33-34.
4. Ibid., II, p.37.

of friends and well-wishers. The problem of self-cultivation, of the culture of the individual, of Bildung generally, in all the complexity and variety of meaning that can be attributed to the concept, is not directly relevant to the subject at issue, and is in any case too big to be taken up for a serious discussion here. Bage is here trying, among other things, to work out a synthesis between the misanthropy of Lindsay and Bardoe on the one hand and the relatively free manners and morals of Sir George, who says to Lindsay while trying to persuade him to accept the tutorship:

> I love the world too well, especially the fairer part of it. A gentleman of your misanthropic turn will mitigate the violence of this passion. It is through magnifiers I look at the world and its pleasures. You turn the glass the opposite way; who knows, but that by our mutual labours, we may at length construct that catoptric instrument, at which divines and philosophers have been labouring so long, and with so little success - the glass of truth; and see things as they are.[1]

It is a tall claim in the last lines: Bage cannot find the glass of truth; at best he can echo the neo-classical canons of reason and a balanced mean,[2] at worst, as we shall see, he can institute the idea of 'mind' an abstract, denuded, dehydrated entity as all-important. But, in general, the argument is familiar. We have met the problem before in Barham Downs and James Wallace in the initial dialogue (epistolary) between William Wyman and Henry Osmond, and Parcelsus Holman and James Wallace respectively. In

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1. Ibid., I, p.20.
2. See Ibid., I, p.67. Lindsay - "If nature ever speaks intelligibly to man, it is when she says, night, not day, was designed for sleep. It is when she says to all animal existence - excess is disorder. In the body natural, in the body politic, in health, in economy, excess is disorder."

Man as he is, however, one suspects, Bage's concerns are far narrower. 'I love the world too well, especially the fairer part of it', says Sir George, and the 'especially' is necessary rather than contingent. Most of his lapses arise from his attachment to an upper class sexual morality, though it is not so much that he is cured of this attachment, as that, like Tom Jones (and the debt is greater than this casual reference suggests), he finds, in his beloved Cornelia Colerain, a kind of protection from his unruly desires.[1] And, as in most such cases, love does not seem to be an adequate guarantee against moral and sexual lapses. The union of Cornelia and Sir George is, in fact, effected through a sentimental blackmail. Sir George, from sheer frustration, shuts himself up in a countryhouse, determined to put an end to his life, wasting it slowly but surely in his retirement. Werther had made suicide fashionable; Sir George however is stopped short in his career, as Cornelia undertakes to cure him of his malady.

The 'catoptric instrument', thus, that Sir George hoped to construct turns out to be nothing better than sentimental love. Lindsay and Bardoe, the two misanthropes come under love's influence, too. One falls in love with Cornelia's friend, Miss Carlill, the pert Quakeress, and the other with Mrs. Birimport, now a widow, and they both thus get somewhat better attuned to human affections.

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1. See Miss Carlill to Lindsay, 'Cornelia Colerain would have formed him [Sir George] to virtue better than all thy philosophy', ibid., p.30.

But Sir George's lapses did not all relate to sexual morality. These Cornelia was prepared to condone as 'the common frailty of young men'. But for 'the waste of all his hours', she could find no excuse.

> The state of a young man [she says] is hopeless, who stops **short in the progress of virtue, or of knowledge. The mind** that does not advance, will pretty certainly recede; and **of all characters, not absolutely vicious and depraved,** none has so much of my contempt as the mere idler.[1]

Similar sentiments are voiced by Miss Carlill when she informs Sir George that Cornelia grieved most that "Thou hast cultivated the acquaintance of no man of letters. Thou has been in pursuit of no science."[2] The regret is for the potential of human mind going unutilized. Cornelia says at another place, earlier, that she was 'grieved and afflicted, to see Sir George Paradyne, designed by nature and fortune to be one of the first characters of his country - to see him here at Paris - stopt short by pleasure in the career of virtue - pursuing trifles with avidity - and sinking in the world's esteem - and his own."[3] It is the same attitude at work here as we find in Anna St. Ives where Anna, the heroine and Frank Henley, the hero set about coldly experimenting with the mental potential (rather imaginary) of Coke Clifton and setting him up in the path of virtue and utility. There is something so abstract, so cold and mechanistic about the whole idea that love becomes a meaningless proposition. Cornelia Colerain's chief qualification is that she had an 'active mind' and 'was

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1. Man as he is, III, p.182.
2. Ibid., IV, p.145.
3. Ibid., III, p.143.

seldom pleased or satisfied but when she was doing something with this mind, or for it'.[1]

This emphasis on the possibilities of mind implies a certain inability, if not also a certain unwillingness, to face facts. Reality is too grim to cope with, grimmer in any case than what can be deduced from a generalised (under-) statement like Sir George's: 'when I consider what man might be, I am sorry to see him what he is.'[2] One possible way out there was, for 'whatsoever may be the general errors of each of the sexes, there is a vast profusion of individual excellence, of friendship unalloyed, of charity unbounded, disinterested love, and piety of angelic proof.' But Sir George doubts if these qualities are anywhere to be found,[3] and, though it is in love he eventually finds some comfort, the note that Man as he is ends on is one of cynicism. Lord Auschamp dies issueless and Bage comments:

> Sir George and Lady Paradyne [Cornelia], may one day be transformed into an Earl and Countess; a most agreeable metamorphosis; and likely to be relished in England, when titles shall be nick names only, in the rest of Europe.[4]

Sir George's reformation is after all a patched-up affair and the inevitable metamorphosis of even such characters as Sir George and Cornelia into peers of the realm has been viewed without enthusiasm of hope. Bardoe says, 'I pay little regard to human opinions ... not even my own.'[5] The remark is very much applicable to Bage

1. Ibid., II, p.89.
2. Ibid., IV, p.174.
3. Ibid., IV, p.177.
4. Ibid., IV, p.235.
5. Ibid., IV, p.6.

himself, who, like Thomas Love Peacock at a later date, lets ideas run riot in his works. There is something of the intellectual dilettante about Bage in all his works. Yet this cynical lack of faith in the possibility of amelioration, even on the plane of the individual, bespeaks a certain disenchantment with the values that he would at another place himself uphold. Another of Bardoe's remarks from towards the end of the novel may usefully be quoted here:

> Wisdom is not made for this world; and he who has it, cannot do a better thing than get rid of all of it which does not serve to prevent his walking into a well, and such similar excursions.[1]

Thus, in Man as he is we find a sense of hopelessness about man's situation in general. Even a rationalistic ethos, of reliance on the mind of man, would not be much help. Love, friendship, mental accomplishments, still offer a measure of solace, but only a partial one.

(7)

(i)

Hermsprong, the hero of Bage's last novel, Hermsprong, or Man as he is not (1796), is by definition from the sub-title a hypothetical figure intended as an anti-thesis, not a particularly good one considering Sir George Paradyne's character, to man as he is.

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1. Ibid., IV, p.230.

Hermsprong's father had been forced by the machinations of a younger brother, the present Lord Grondale, to fly to the Continent, and was then cheated of his rightful claim to the title and estate. While in France, he fell in love with the only child of Jean Rupré, a rich weaver of Nantes. The match was not liked by the girl's father and the young couple eloped to America. Hermsprong was born there and then brought up among the aborigins.

The father had acquired property before he died of an inflammatory fever. On his death, the mother wrote to Jean Rupre in France who forgave the penitent and now rich daughter, also because in old age, 'except money, he was poor in the articles of comfort', like affectionate human care, for example.[1] Mother and son came to live with him, and Hermsprong eventually inherited also his grandfather's property.

Hermsprong's savage upbringing had not quite fitted him for the dull routine of business and he was not particularly well-disposed to it. Yet he had a shrewd business sense, and when the French Revolution came he sold his assets in France and transferred the money to English funds.

He himself later came to England, partly for reasons of business, partly to visit the family seat and to see if he could settle in England for life, partly to claim the estate of Grondale if the uncle's stewardship of it did not satisfy him.

From what he knew of his family's history, he had no very high opinion of Lord Grondale, and though he came with an open

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1. See Hermsprong, 1799, III, p.29.

mind, his dislike was reinforced by what he saw. He soon fell in love with Miss Campinet, the only child of Lord Grondale, but could not, even for love, pay the father the respect due to a peer of the realm. Even as it was, because of his life among savages, he had failed to acquire the prejudice of the civilized European society which requires that everybody should pay deference to rank and wealth. The extent of his wealth also enabled him to defy authority based on nothing better.

In the beginning, and for a major part of the novel, with his identity undisclosed, he is a non-person pitted against a member of the highest rank in the country. He is framed and tried on the charge of being a Jacobin and French spy, and is acquitted only when he reveals his identity, and when it is proved that, despite his familiarity with The Rights of Man, he is a defender of peace and order, the proof depending largely on his support for King and Constitution, and his clever way of doling out money and thus quelling a riot.

For the title and estate of Grondale, he might have had to file a suit in the Court of Chancery, with the outcome uncertain and in any case likely to take a long time. But, eventually, with some little suspense not worth the name, Lord Grondale, in a death-bed scene (Bage himself not believing in any genuine last moment conversion[1]), accepts Hermsprong as his nephew. The young couple are at last united, thus obviating the need for the hero to go to court.

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1. Ibid., III, p.255.

(ii)

The cult of the noble savage, or of primitive communities, provided a useful critical stance from which to view the ills of society. The state of nature was not so much natural as hypothetical and functional. Every now and then in Hermsprong, the hero speaks of his savage, outlandish education to account for the unconventionality of his approach and to expose the fatuity of conventions and customs in England.[1] The criticism relates to various aspects of civilization generally and of English society in particular: manners and politeness, intolerance of religious and political persuasions not one's own, a general dislike of opinions as such, the fashionable shallowness of learning, the luxury and inanity born of a life of affluence from commerce, etc.

On all these points, the critical stance is provided not only by the Indians in America but also by the newly fashioned constitution and Government of the European Communities there.[2] Neither of these communities, as we shall see, is perfect, yet their alternately and jointly providing the superior alternative to conditions in Europe or England is not fortuitous. The points on which European society has been criticised make it plain that what is postulated is not an abstract, absolute antithesis to man as he is, or things as they are but a set of values that squared with the immediate needs of the class that Bage belonged to. Hermsprong himself, from having imbibed a reasonably fair portion of the best

1. For example, see ibid., I, pp.218-220; II, p.29.
2. For the latter, see ibid., II, p.164; III, p.237, to quote only two examples.

traditions of both, the European and Indian communities in America, is, to a large extent, an ideal bourgeois figure.

His property comes from trade, the fortunes earned by his father and grandfather. He values money, because it enables him to exercise benevolence, and would not spend it on buying comfort and convenience for himself. It also makes him financially independent, 'as far as social man can be independent'. He 'must be free from the necessity of doing little things, or saying little words to any man'.[1] As he says at another place, his fortune also sets him 'above the necessity of employment'.[2]

Hermsprong's friend and biographer, Gregory Glen, the narrator of the novel, is much poorer. But he is, in the same sense as the hero, a free agent. He was the bastard of one Gregory Grooby, Esq., a rich country gentleman of Patten-place in Devonshire. His childhood was not particularly happy. But he attracted the notice of Mr. Brown, the local parson, a benevolent and liberal man, who saw that the boy had genius and took charge of his education. Mr. Brown also secured for his protégé an annuity of £80 per annum but only on condition that, on growing up, he left Patten-place (where he could constantly remind people of his father's moral transgression) and never came within forty miles of it. The son of nobody, a man of no roots and obligations (he remains a bachelor), it is partly the annuity which enables him to maintain a measure of independence. Like Hermsprong, he is free from the necessity of seeking employment,

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1. Ibid., II, pp.39-40.
2. Ibid., II, p.45.

though there are degrees of freedom depending upon the extent of one's fortune, and he cannot defy Lord Grondale as Hermsprong can and does. Not exactly a poor wretch dependent upon others for employment or charity to maintain himself and his family, Glen acquires, from his unfortunate antecedents and his financial independence, an unconventional approach, a much greater portion of which Hermsprong has acquired from having lived among savages and from possessing greater wealth.

It is Hermsprong's fortune and even more his claim to the estate of Grondale, one suspects, that are his trump cards. His acquittal largely depends upon them and it is these that give him 'a spirit of undeviating rectitude which spurns at every thing mean and selfish - an unruffled sureness of temper, and a sort of benevolence'.[1]

The money and the benevolence, however, have, in one instance, patently conservative objectives. One of the charges against Hermsprong at his trial was that he had aided and abetted a riot by workers in a mine owned by Lord Grondale. He had been seen moving among the rioteers and giving them money. This was, in those dangerous days, enough to cause a presumption of seditious intent, but a young magistrate, who had just qualified, gave evidence in Hermsprong's favour. The magistrate had been with the mob to read the riot act and had failed to keep peace. He had, however, heard Hermsprong's speech to the crowd:

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1. Ibid., III, p.168.

> My friends, perhaps it may be true that your wages are not adequate to the furnishing you with all the superfluities of life which you may desire; but these are unhappy times, and require of you a greater degree of frugality and forbearance. My friends, we cannot all be rich; there is no possible equality of property which can last a day. If you were capable of desiring it, which I hope you are not, you must wade through such scenes of guilt and horror to obtain it, as you would tremble to think of. You must finish the horrid conflict by destroying each other. And why should you desire it? The rich have luxurious tables and diseases; if you have poverty, you have health. Add but content, and you have all that is worth having here.

In substance, the speech amounts to the following: it assumes that workers ask for a rise in wages, not because these are inadequate for their basic needs, but because they are an envious lot who want the superfluities of life, which, one may add, the rich should not have either, but they are not the point at issue and, in practice anyway, they can always manage things their own way; the state of the nation demands sacrifices, frugality and forbearance, in practice, from workers; inequality of property, if not really sanctioned by divine ordinance, is nevertheless as formidable as if it were, because the opposite is impracticable and unthinkable, in this life, and, perhaps, because it derives from unequal individual abilities; equality is undesirable in itself, but is still more so because any attempt at achieving it is bound to lead to violence; poverty is better than riches, because the poor are healthy and, with just a little mental effort, by imbibing contentment, they can also be happy as the rich cannot be with all their anxious care for their possessions.

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1. Ibid., III, pp.186-197.

The last of these arguments is a little too crude for the modern sophisticated ideologue of capitalism. But the rest of Hermsprong's speech reads as a little too familiar to us today. It cannot even be accused of being deficient in sophistication, for even the leaders of the community in our own day, and not only the lay men on the street, make use of similar arguments when a strike is threatened or is on. At least the arguments are based on similar premises.

Bage's man as he is not is, thus, a demagogue for the establishment. The bit about 'you must wade through such scenes of guilt and horror to obtain it, as you would tremble to think of. You must finish the conflict by destroying each other,' might have come from Burke's Reflections.

Part of the dislike that Bage felt for violence and the mob may have been due to the turn events in France had taken, which were too hard for most English radicals to swallow; part may also have been due to the way the mob had been active for the King and the Church. Bage had radical friends in Birmingham and knew Dr. Priestly personally. The zealous sermon of the Rev. Dr. Blick, of the Anglican Church, on the anniversary of the riot in Birmingham which destroyed the great chemist's laboratory, is obviously intended as a piece of topical satire. But Dr. Blick did not exactly say that the rioting and the arson were right and so far Bage would agree with him.[1]

The difference between the apologists of the establishment

1. See ibid., II, pp.34-6.

and most English radicals, we have seen, was not a serious one. Bage caricatures the panic felt by the defenders of the King and the Church, for example, in Dr. Blick's Sermon and in the prosecuting speech of Corrow, the lawyer, at Hermsprong's trial.[1] The trial itself is viewed as a farce. But the hero's sympathies for the French Revolution are equivocal, and he is as much for law and order, as much for King and Constitution as a thoroughbred Tory might be. When a turbulent man in the crowd that Hermsprong was haranguing into peace, starts abusing the King, our brave noble savage knocks him down and says:

> My good friend, ... I am sorry to have hurt you. Any thing you had said relative to myself, I should not have so resented; but so to revile your King, is to destroy the concord that ought to subsist betwixt him and all his subjects, and overthrow all civil order.[2]

This of course does not nullify Bage's charge of corruption against the Government. The freedom that Bage and his class were asking for meant no more than the extension of their privileges vis-a-vis the Government and the ruling oligarchy. And, if on the one hand Bage was harassed by officers of the Government, with their demand for excise duties, etc., on the other he was equally harassed by the workers in his manufactory. Between 1794 and 1801 they made three wage-claims and Bage did not view these as just and rightful. In one of his letters to William Hutton, written in 1801, not long before his death, he says:

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1. See ibid., III, pp.183-6.
2. Ibid., III, p.198.

> Another meeting among my men! Another (the third) raising of wages! What will all this end in? William Pitt seems playing off another of his alarming manoeuvres - Invasion - against the meeting of Parliament, to scare us into a quiet parting with our money.[1]

Though Bage thought that workers could live, with frugality, on the wages they earned, and have health and happiness to boot, yet it might be prudent to accept their wage-claims from time-to-time and/or to dole out charity to them. Hermsprong eventually gives money to a respectable-looking person in the crowd with a request to distribute it among the more needy of the rioters,[2] and after 'a few of the most forward' were 'bribed' and others were given ale, the crowd dispersed. Hermsprong had continued late among them and next day 'not a man was to be seen, all was peace and order'.[3] This reminds us of how John Halifax, in the novel named after him, uses similar tactics to save the house and the mill of his master from being burnt. The events in Mrs. Craik's novel, incidentally, date back to the early years of the nineteenth century, though the novel was published in 1858.

In Hermsprong, thus, the noble savage is not an arbitrary, imaginative, fictional angle of vision from which to view the ills of society in general. The social criticism here has a definite, historical orientation. Our hero makes the ideal businessman, he is a representative of the new class of businessmen, who

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1. BNL, IX, p.xxii.
2. This generous distribution of money among the crowd has an uncanny similarity with an episode in Smollett's Sir Launcelot Greaves (1760-1), 1905, p.173. Sir Launcelot, however, does not seem to have any ulterior motives for his liberality.
3. Op.cit., III, p.199.

challenged the favourite prejudices of the period, like the ipso facto superiority allotted to birth and rank, but at the same time did everything possible to keep the working poor in subjection.

(iii)

But while life in the midst of nature could mould a tough, enduring character, suited to the needs of the middle class adventurer, it also provided escape from the increasing urbanization of society, the increasing division of labour, and what Ian Watt calls 'the unnatural intellectualism' of the middle class. Rousseau's imposition on Robinson Crusoe of meanings it is perhaps incapable of bearing[1] is no accident. 'Nature' could at one and the same time serve a multiplicity of ends. It could cater to the urge for escape and also act as a peg on which to hang one's conservative or radical philosophy - a philosophy based in the material amenities and comforts of life, or a philosophy recommending stringent book-keeping, parsimonious living and profitable action. And there was perhaps no essential dichotomy between the two, for a desire to escape was most often a way of rejecting the aristocratic values and thus, by implication, a way of upholding middle class standards.[2] But Hermsprong is not

1. See, in this connexion, 'Robinson Crusoe as a Myth', Eighteenth-Century English Literature, ed. by James L. Clifford, New York, 1959, pp.158-179.

2. An interesting evidence on this point is provided by Dr. George Cheyne. He took offence when, on the publication of his 'Book of Long Life and Health' it was said that he had 'turn'd mere Enthusiast, and resolv'd all Things into Allegory and Analogy, advis'd People to turn Monks, to run into Desarts, and to live

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entirely a middle class figure. He also repudiates aspects of middle class life. If this implies any contradiction, it nevertheless throws light on a not very untypical duality in the thought of the period.

In France, Hermaprong's grandfather had desired him to 'be well-skilled in book-keeping'. But he 'did not like the confinement'. He suffered 'a great decrease of plumpness and animal spirits'. These he had enjoyed in America and when his mother saw him declining, she let him run over the Continent on foot.[1] When he came to Grondale, he was impressed by the beauties of the place. "The wild and romantic scenes of Cornwall", he says, "with its natural curiosities, have pleased me, and engaged my attention. Grondale and its environs have particular beauties". He decided to stay there at least for a time.[2] His situation in this respect is similar to Gregory Glen's. Glen was at one stage admitted into

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Contd. from previous page] on Roots, Herbs, and wild Fruits; in fine, that I was at Bottom a mere Leveller, and for destroying Order, Ranks and Property, every one's but my own!' But on the next page he goes on to say that 'the Diet and Manner of Living of the middling Rank, who are but moderate and temperate in Foods of the common and natural Product of the Country ... is that intended by the Author of Nature for this Climate and Country, and consequently the most wholesome and fittest in general'. (The English Malady, 1733, pp.ii-iii). The prescription of a regular regimen of a temperate and moderate diet, even for the cure of distempers, was not only likely to be misconstrued by the prejudiced and the privileged as a manifestation of 'levelling tendencies', but perhaps had its radical implications, insofar as it showed preference for the middle class way of life as against the aristocratic. Perhaps at some point it tied with that middle class emphasis on saving rather than spending. Adam Smith said, 'Capitals are increased by parsimony, and diminished by prodigality and misconduct'. Wealth of Nations (Bk.II,Ch.III), Op.cit., II, p.94.

1. Op.cit., III, pp.29-30.
2. Ibid., II, p.45.

a 'compting-house', but only a fortnight's occupation convinced him that his 'genius was not the genius of multiplication and division'.[1] He then went to and settled in the village of Grondale, 'with a prospect the most beautiful' he had ever seen.[2] From the 'compting-house to the beauties of nature is but a logical progress. With Hermsprong another consideration has its weight. Love of Miss Campinet is another reason why he decides to stay at Grondale.[3]

While Hermsprong, thus, epitomizes virtues that Bage as a bourgeois would recommend for general acceptance, he is also a runaway from the routine drudgery of business and finds refuge in nature and love. A similar duality, and even a lack of clarity, can be deduced from Bage's treatment of the life of primitive communities in America.

The sports of the young Indians, we learn, are 'calculated to render man robust, and inure him to labour and fatigue'.[4] Hermsprong is only half a savage. Even so, while he lived in America, he never 'knew sickness', and never 'felt ennui'.[5] These may be absolute norms, but a life without sickness and ennui, a life inured to labour and fatigue had its specific utility for Bage. Sickliness in itself can perhaps never be welcomed, but we may remember that in Victorian fiction the strong man, with his rather reasonable contempt

1. Ibid., I, p.28.
2. Ibid., I, p.31.
3. Ibid., III, p.31.
4. Ibid., III, p.35.
5. Ibid., III, p.26.

for the fragile sensibility of the weak visionary, who saw images in fire and water, was not necessarily a favoured character. Time and again we find the novelist siding with the 'weak', who is, for his very weakness perhaps, capable of a wide range of sympathies.

But Nature, or the life of primitive communities, does not only provide the necessary and useful conditioning, is not only a school for 'case-hardening' of character. Hermsprong himself, when he contrasts the life of the civilized European with the life of the Indian savage gives another reason for his appreciation of the latter. He says:

> It should seem ... that Nature, in her more simple modes, is unable to furnish a rich European with a due portion of pleasurable sensations. He is obliged to have recourse to masses of inert matter, which he causes to be converted into a million of forms, far the greatest part solely to feed the incurable craving known by the name of vanity. All the arts are employed to amuse him, and expel the tedium vitae, acquired by the stimulus of pleasure being used till it will stimulate no more, and all the arts are insufficient. Of this disease, with which you are here so terribly afflicted, the native Americans know nothing. When war and hunting no more require their exertions, they can rest in peace. After satisfying the more immediate wants of nature, they dance, they play; weary of this, they bask in the sun, and sing. If enjoyment of existence be happiness, they seem to possess it; not indeed so high raised as yours, sometimes, but more continued, and more uninterrupted.[1]

The indictment of the decadence of civilization, in the first part of the passage, is actuated by the same motive as Bage's criticism of Mr. Birimport, the retired East India merchant in Man as he is, or of Lord Grondale in Hermsprong, a peer of the realm and a mine-owner, who had among other means of sensual titillation a grotto with mirrored walls and pictures of nudes on them. The second part of the passage is actuated by purely romantic considerations, like the

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1. Ibid., II, p.21.

longing for a life of carefree happiness - the desire for a restful life of play, dance and music in the midst of nature, a desire that finds its logical culmination in the song of the lotus eaters.

We have seen how the anxiety, hurry and bustle resulting from incessant labour required for a life of industry and commerce have been viewed by Bage with dislike. Happiness, either in the midst of nature and among savage people or in the circle of friends, has been regarded as antithetical to, and independent of, national, commercial prosperity. It may perhaps be unfair to say that the idea of wealth as inimical to happiness was a deliberate ruse to deceive the poor. In order to make an impression on others, it is necessary not only to put up a show, but also to believe that the show is the real thing; not only to pretend to be sincere, but to be convinced of one's sincerity. Bage might have felt certain that real happiness was possible only in a psychological climate that ruled out the increasingly hectic pursuit of wealth and progress. He may not have seen any real contradiction between his approval and reconstruction of plainly bourgeois values, and his distinct dislike of the momentum of bourgeois development which leads to the desire for an insular world of nature and emotions. In any case, both these strands are simultaneously present in his work.

It is because of this dual interest that Bage's attitude to primitive communities shows signs of confusion, a confusion that is not only his. Even a 'pure' romanticist (if the concept is plausible), like Chateaubriand opens his Atala with what reads like regret for the loss of the French colonies in America, and, while

celebrating the life of the Natchez and the beauties of nature, he still wants the Indian communities to be civilized by dedicated missionaries, even prefers the 'stable, busy life', that the Natchez had been trained into by Father Aubry, to 'the wandering, idle life of the savage.'[1]

Bage, likewise, would have the Indians civilized. But he is not very clear on the subject. Hermsprong regrets that he is only half a savage. The 'active part' of his life was spent like other young Indians in sport.[2] As a result he 'could almost run up a tree like a squirrel; almost catch an antelope'.[3] Almost because, as he says, 'the sedentary portion of my life [was] spent with my father, in learning languages, in mathematics, in I know not what. My father, always thinking of Europe, was desirous I should have a taste, at least, of the less useful, but more ornamental parts of knowledge'.[4] Therefore, he 'could not acquire the speed of many of my companions; my sense of smelling was less acute - my sagacity inferior'.[5]

Hermsprong would have liked to equal his companions in physical prowess and agility. The acquisition of the less useful and more ornamental parts of knowledge only made him superficial.[6] Yet, at another place, he concedes that savages cannot read, and that he

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1. Atala and Rene, Signet Classics, New York 1962, p.60.
2. Op.cit., III, p.25.
3. Ibid., III, p.28.
4. Ibid., III, pp.25-26.
5. Ibid., III, p.25.
6. Ibid., III, p.26.

would not give up the pleasure he derives from reading for any pleasure they may have.[1] Their inability to read, however, is no serious handicap. They have, Hermsprong says, their 'exertions of intellect' as exhibited in their songs, for example. Though he concedes that in 'variety of knowledge', which may only lead to an intellectual shallowness, 'the Aborigines of America are much your [of the Europeans] inferiors', he asks, 'But in reality, is reading all pleasure? or is it pleasure at all?' It may also be a disadvantage. 'Your contradictious disputations, eternal philosophy, are they not calculated to confound than enlighten the understanding?'[2]

The last question does not quite square with Bage's enthusiasm for freedom and variety of opinion in America, nor his disapproval of the polite hatred of opinion, so widespread in Britain, except insofar as the latter may indicate a frivolous, irresponsible character and a willing inability to grapple with serious problems. The questions are nevertheless legitimate, because reading might mean no more than the voracious craze of silly women for silly novels and 'contradictious disputations' no more than a glib, fashionable gabble of half-baked, half-digested ideas. But the question does express some indecision, some doubt on Bage's part. He is not sure if knowledge and learning are really a disadvantage. At another place, in the course of a dialogue with Mr. Sumelin, Hermsprong says that what the savages 'most fail in, is intellectual

1. Ibid., II, p.22.
2. Ibid., II, pp.22-23.

pleasure'. He argues that their happiness is, for this reason, far from perfect. Because of their prejudices, Europeans of course would not allow that primitive, uncivilized communities can be happy; the savages nevertheless enjoy a state of relative happiness. As Hermsprong says:

> They have ... no inconsiderable portion of positive happiness, and a still greater of what may be negative; they want the far greater part of your moral causes of misery.[1]

But when it is pointed out by Mr. Sumelin that they do not have plenty, and perhaps not even enough, of food, Hermsprong says:

> There are improvident characters among them, and the number is not diminished by your rum bottles; but they have in general enough, though not what you would call plenty. No, what they most fail in, is intellectual pleasure. To enlarge their felicity, I ask not your gaudy habiliments, to puff them up with the silliest of all the vanities; I ask not your glittering equipages, to give them at once pride and debility. Keep your palaces and pomp. Keep your splendid abundance, and its diseases. Give them to multiply the objects of their reflection; and to extend the powers of their mind. That, to me, should seem the happiest state of society, in which all its members had the power, so [to] alternate the employments of the mind and body, that the operations of each might be enjoyment. So would the rich man's curse be avoided, that of not knowing what to do with himself; and the poor man's also, that of knowing it but too well.[2]

One may note that though Bage remarks against rum here, the Indian

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1. Ibid., II, p.162.

2. Ibid., II, pp.162-163. See also, in this connexion, Charles Hall, The Effects of Civilization (1805). For him too the 'happiest state' is the one 'where activity and rest are held in a harmonious balance'. (vide, Alexander Gray, The Socialist Tradition: From Moses to Lenin, 1946, p.268. Mrs. Inchbald also, in her Nature and Art, II, pp.199-200, draws attention to the problem when she points out that society as it is constituted leaves some without work and forces others to work beyond their capacities.

chief speaks of 'rum to cheer us' as one of the benefits to accrue from contact with the Europeans,[1] and the use of ale to bribe the indigent rioters is not viewed with disapproval. One may even dislike the patronising tone and implied contradiction in: 'Give them to multiply the objects of their reflection; and to extend the powers of their mind [Civilize them.]'[2] But this last proposition proceeds from an awareness that the happiness of the savage is incomplete. Thus, while at one place Bage rules that the lack of learning, of intellectual pleasure is no real handicap, that the savages have also their 'exertions of intellect', here he is less of a believer in the romantic dream of an unfettered, blissful primitive life. One would think that even the comparative advantage that primitive societies have over civilization is not a real one. For, if with increasing division of labour eighteenth-century Europe has lost the desirable synthesis between mental and manual work, the Indian community, from its lack of the sources of intellectual pleasure, suffers from a similar deficiency. Whether such a synthesis is all that is desired to bridge the gap between the civilized and primitive communities, or the rich and the poor, is a different question. The point at issue is that Bage wavers between an idealization of primitive societies and a certain scepticism about them.

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1. Ibid., III, p.16.
2. See also in this connexion Man as he is, op.cit., IV, pp.212- The story of Fidel, the negro-slave, is a version of Maria Edgeworth's 'The Grateful Negro'.

(iv)

This scepticism goes much deeper - Bage is uncertain about the possibility of any real improvement in the condition of man. Despite his admiration for America, his ideal society has not been achieved even in that paradise of freedom and progress.[1] Perhaps the happiest state of society, as visualized by him, is impracticable, unattainable. For, as Hermsprong says,

> Manners must change much, and governments more. The first is possible; for manners are addicted to change. The latter is hopeless; governments do not change, at least for the better.[2]

The opposition of the free-traders to Étatisme leads on the philosophical plane to the anarchist's opposition to all government, as in Godwin,[3] - an opposition which has obviously far-reaching implications. Bage seems to advance a plea for the abolition of governments, as they cannot change 'for the better'. Yet it is the tone of despair that is immediate and paramount here.

But America has its charms. J.R. MacGillivray has analysed the possible motives behind emigration to America in the last decades of the century. All sorts of people looked up to the New World as a land of promise and faith, as a sanctuary and asylum from financial worries and political difficulties, as the rediscovered 'earthly paradise beyond the Pillars of Hercules', as a dream come true. The dream was made of a confused mass of wishes and desires, from the most fanciful to the very earthy. J.P.Brissot,

1. See Hermsprong, op.cit., II, pp.163-4.
2. Ibid., II, p.164.
3. See Halévy, Philosophical Radicalism, op.cit., p.130.

a banker, 'not only proposed to establish a model state in America but expected to make a profit therefrom', and was at the same time fascinated by it as the land of liberty. French émigrés, at a later date, 'found it discreet to put the ocean between themselves and the revolutionary tribunal'. English liberals had by 1794 'full cause to realize that the choice [for them] lay between freedom in America and compulsory emigration to Mr. Pitt's ideal colony for radicals at Botany Bay'. Young poets 'intoxicated by the strong wine of [their] own imagination'; people weary of the need of earning their bread by the sweat of their brow and looking for an easy life; those who had despaired of the possibility of any material improvement in the rotten state of England; etc.[1] - it was not such a bee-line, perhaps, as the enumeration might suggest and, of course, not all who planned actually made the journey.

Now, Bage's hero, if he did not find any part of Europe suited to his taste, not even England, would, he says, return to America, buy 30,000 acres of land, and amuse himself 'with peopling a desert'.[2] We come across some discrepancy about two hundred pages later. 'I have', says our hero, 'sixty thousand acres of uncleared land upon the Potowmac. It cost me little. I have imagined a society of friends within a two mile ring; and I have imagined a mode of making it happy. In this, it is possible, I may not reach the point I desire; but with common prudence, we cannot fail of plenty, and, in time, of affluence'.[3]

1. See 'The Pantisocracy Scheme and its Immediate Background', Studies in English, by members of University College Toronto, Toronto, pp.131-169.
2. Op.cit., III, p.30.
3. Ibid., III, p.239.

The material discrepancy between 30,000 acres and 60,000 and between a projected purchase and actual possession does not really matter. But, while attainment of perfect happiness is doubtful, 'plenty' and even 'affluence' can be achieved through 'common prudence'. The words suggest that what lies behind the idea of emigration here is not merely what MacGillivray calls 'the nostalgic urge of sophisticated peoples toward the simple or primitive life',[1] nor a young poet's romantic fancy, but the desire to tap the still largely uncultivated resources of America. The most peaceful, isolated place in the world, to quote from Ian Watt's essay on 'Robinson Crusoe as a Myth', 'must succumb to the irresistible teleology of Capitalism'.[2] The last years of the century are of course not the first, and what was a clear-cut programme of action, requiring and generating enthusiasm in the early years, could not be accepted now without qualifications. But one may recall in this connexion that while Coleridge accused Southey (when the latter abandoned the Pantisocracy Scheme) of falling 'in love with that low, dirty, gutter-grubbing Trull, WORLDLY PRUDENCE',[3] Bage's hero speaks of prudence as one of the necessary qualifications for happiness. We should also remember that, as J.R. MacGillivray has shown, the Pantisocrats themselves 'had approached the scheme in what a business man ... might have called a practical manner'.[4] Much of the idea for the plan seems

1. Op.cit., p.134.
2. Op.cit., p.162.
3. Quoted by G. Carnall, Robert Southey and his Age, Oxford 1960, p.37.
4. Op.cit., p.133.

to have come from J.P. Brissot's travelogue.[1] The reasons for the scheme were perhaps neither very fanciful nor was the plan based entirely on idealistic, republican, egalitarian dreams. One does not suggest that for Coleridge or Southey, or even Hermsprong, the economic exploitation of the untapped natural resources of America was the objective, but the possibility of an easy life of affluence does seem to have come into consideration. Which only means that varied, and even contradictory motives, may well co-exist.

But Hermsprong's dream of a settlement in America, like Coleridge's and Southey's, is abandoned. He finds England congenial, makes friends, weds Miss Campinet, and inherits property as Sir Charles Campinet. Is Bage merely making a topical allusion? Or was the abandonment of the dream by Coleridge and Southey the manifest concomitant of an attitude that was shared by many of their contemporaries? For, Hermsprong retains the author's sympathy, though the sympathy is tinctured with sadness. Domesticity, love, friendship, for reasons of political or financial prudence or just from conviction, are no mean substitutes for republican or romantic dreams. Both Coleridge and Southey, like Hermsprong, found peace in domesticity. Godwin, after his spirited attack on marriage in Political Justice, makes a volte face in the Memoirs of his wife and in St. Leon; and I do not think it

1. See MacGillivray, op.cit.; Sister Eugenia, 'Coleridge's Scheme of Pantisocracy and American Travel Accounts', PMLA, 45, 1930, pp.1069-1084; Mary Cathryne Park, Joseph Priestley and the Problem of Pantisocracy, Philadelphia 1947. For a perceptive assessment of J.P. Brissot, see Werner Stark, America: Ideal and Reality, op.cit.

quite right to characterize the one as rationalistic and the other romantic, or vice versa.

Perhaps, even after New Eloisa and Werther, the 'human spirit' had not yet completely liberated itself from social bonds. Perhaps it never did nor ever would. In fact one remembers in this connexion that the Julie-Wolmar relationship (like the Kitty-Levin relationship in Anna Karenina) is only slightly, if at all, less important than the Julie-St. Preux relationship, though the latter more wildly caught the imagination of Rousseau's readers down to George Saintsbury who would have the first hundred pages printed on the best available vellum and consign the rest to fire and oblivion. One also recalls that in Goethe's Werther Charlotte caught the fancy of the hero because and when she was carefully tending a flock of children - younger brothers and sisters.[1] Perhaps even Rousseau and Goethe were bound, consciously or unconsciously, to have some admiration for middle-class virtues like domesticity, economy, etc.: Richardson's Clarissa was after all the great model for most late eighteenth century English and Continental novelists. Perhaps some form of

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1. One remembers, in this context, Maria Edgeworth, the complete 'bourgeois', tending her step-brothers and sisters, over a dozen of them, and declining for their sake the only offer of marriage she received. Thackeray recorded his dislike of such domesticity in his ballad, 'Sorrows of Werther':

> Charlotte, having seen his body
> Borne before her on a shutter,
> Like a well-conducted person,
> Went on cutting bread and butter.

(Ballads and The Rose and the Ring, Works, 1890, XXI, p.78) Thackeray is critical of Werther, too, for his romantic infatuation as also for his sanctimoniousness.

personal, family tie has its eternal romantic appeal. Or, perhaps, as earlier pointed out, on the English scene in any case, the radicals and anti-radicals were not so far apart as they would seem or can be made out to be.

Whatever the reason, and whatever the correct characterization of this shift, it is certain that in England, in most cases, a certain recoil from the more radical speculations of the early years after the French Revolution followed upon the Terror in France and the severe repressive measures at home. The anti-jacobin reaction, while it induced a desire for, and even actual (as in the case of Joseph Priestly) emigration, also gave people the feeling that republican, egalitarian dreams had best be abandoned. Hermsprong's defence in the trial scene reads like a recantation, a loud disclaimer of genuine or alleged jacobinical principles and sympathies.

The acquittal of Horne Tooke, Hardy, Holcroft, Thelwall, etc. in the notorious trial of 1794 perhaps gave to Bage, with others of like sympathies, a confidence we find reflected in the diagrammatic confrontation between Lord Grondale and Hermsprong, but the fear of being tried and convicted is also reflected in the trial scene. If the acquittal (of Horne Tooke, etc.) withheld the hand of authority, the radicals had learnt their lesson too.

(v)

Bage's reliance on individual excellence, domesticity, and love and friendship of a sort, however, is not the product of, though it may have been accentuated by, the despair born of anti-

jacobin reaction, Some kind of a privileged insularity of the individual, or of a group, had always been desirable. We notice in his work a continuous narrowing down, a progressive shift from the group to the individual. His first two novels are named after locales, and depict fairly large circles of enlightened people. In Mount Henneth it would be difficult to allot to any single individual the place of prime importance, except in a technical sense to James Foston. Then the circle starts getting smaller, and the narrowing down of the circle is accompanied by an increasing exaltation of the individual, till in Hermsprong we are left with no comparable ancillaries to the hero who succeeds in realizing a world of private happiness, and, what Bage would not admit, of comfort and ease. He gets around him 'a society of friends', only the circle is much smaller than in earlier novels and Mr. Woodcock, the curate, and Gregory Glen, the narrator, in no way attain the stature of their patron. With the narrowing down goes what may be called an artistic maturity. The plot of Bage's last two novels is less diffuse, more compact, than that of his earlier novels.

We notice, however, a certain retreat in the last novel from Bage's cynicism in Man as he is. Hermsprong ends up as a member of the landed gentry, with the possibility of eventually becoming a peer. Such promotion in Sir George Paradyne's case was viewed with suspicion. In Hermsprong, Bage's sentiments on Hermsprong's rise in the social scale are at best neutral. But the noble savage here, as in Voltaire's L'Ingénu, has been eventually tamed and the

general impression that one gets from the novel is one of sadness. This sadness may have been occasioned by a variety of reasons, such as, the failure of expectations from the French Revolution, even a fear arising from the course of events in France, repression of radicals at home, growing difficulty in business, the behaviour of the working class mob, the war with the French, or just old age.

V

Conclusion

Bage, then, seems to be desperately trying to uphold the values he sees daily flouted by his fellow businessmen. It is an impossible feat he sets out to perform. Moral idealism and the mechanics of profit and loss are incompatible; and perhaps, among other things, some uncertain awareness of the futility of the task occasions his increasing withdrawal from the world. Even so, in his first novel, the ideal utopia of the élite was conceived with hope and confidence. Then an increasing reliance on individual sensibility and on the concept of happiness in insulated or primitive societies enters his work, and eventually a note of cynical scepticism. But he never quite gives up his class affinity. Primitivism in him is not so much an absolute, romantic concept as it provides the necessary training for the ideal businessman; his noble savage is neither so noble nor so savage but that he could not qualify for the post of the benevolent director of a business firm, or even, like Brooke's fool of quality, the ownership of an estate. The nature-art dichotomy in him is the reflection of class antagonism between small traders and industrialists on the one hand and the decadent, moribund landed aristocracy and propertied bourgeois - the East India nabobs, etc., on the other.

One wonders if the tendencies we find present in Bage are at all the manifestation of a 'romantic' streak in him. Association, retirement to the countryside, enjoyment of a well-

earned leisure in the midst of nature, among friends and sensible people and books, are concepts that merchants, traders, businessmen, industrialists were much enamoured of. Benjamin Franklin, whose life spans virtually the whole of the eighteenth century and who witnessed the triple revolution of the century, played some rôle in each, and was respected by radicals in two continents, retired from business at the age of forty-two, and moved to the outskirts of the city, to live on an annual dividend of £500, to enjoy his leisure 'uninterrupted by the little cares and fatigues of business', to read, study, make experiments, to converse and correspond with friends.[1] In fiction, at a later date, we find John Halifax staying most of the time in the country and always retaining a mawkish affection for its beauties. Even the desire for a circle of friends, the popularity of the love and friendship theme, we might say, seems to have been partly the reflection of the need of the small trader, businessman and industrialist (in a world that is still largely unsuited to them) to stick to each other, to lean on each other not only for material help but for emotional stability. Matthew Boulton, the Birmingham industrialist and partner of James Watt, built himself a house close to his Soho factory and, in his private letters, called it 'the inn of friendship on Handsworth Heath'. He used to invite his friends, cultured men of letters and science, to his house and thus formed the nucleus of what is known as the Lunar Society. Many early industrialists acted, at one time or another, as the munificent

1. See Letter to Cadwallader Colden, 29 Sept. 1748, The Autobiography and Other Writings, op.cit., pp.217-8.

patrons of art and letters.

One may legitimately ask if the tendencies we find manifested in Robert Bage are in any way different from similar tendencies to be noticed among at least a few industrialists and businessmen of the period. Benjamin Franklin's, or John Halifax's type of love of retirement and quiet does not bear the same trade mark, is perhaps not of the same make, as Rousseau's and Wordsworth's. Bage would be a fitter companion to the former two. Yet his criticism of money economy, of the unnatural intellectualism of mechanistic philosophers, his emphasis on individual culture are far too insistent to allow of his being completely identified with the newer middle class to which he belonged and its ethics. He would have agreed with the practical precepts of Franklin in the Advice to a Young Tradesman but would not have appreciated the emphasis laid on monetary motives. He has significant points of difference with Maria Edgeworth. There is a strong presumption in favour of considering him as a symptom of a 'romantic reaction' against the values of his class.

Even the fashionable, snobbish taste of the rich merchant for country-houses and gardens is, no doubt, the manifestation, in part, of the desire of sophisticated people for simple things. But we see in Bage, though not a complete separation between the desire for sophistication or progress and the desire for simplicity, yet a deepening breach, with an increasing emphasis on the latter. It would be perhaps wrong to view the romantic revival as a reaction; far truer to say that it marks the differantiation of a tendency,

that was present even in the 'Augustan', neo-classical view, into two divergent attitudes.

Here a quotation from Professor C.B. MacPherson, though in its context applicable to a much wider field of history and concerned with far deeper problems, may be relevant:

> Ever since John Stuart Mill's attack on Bentham's utilitarianism, which had by then become the embodiment of political individualism, the weakness of liberal individualism has been more or less identified with Bentham's narrowly selfish, narrowly rationalist, version of it. The Benthamite assumption that man in his political relations was and should be treated as a calculator of his own interests, and that this exhausted his nature as political man, has been seen as a perversion of the fundamental liberal insights of an earlier tradition.
>
> On this sort of diagnosis, the repair that was needed was one that would bring back a sense of the moral worth of the individual, and combine it again with a sense of the moral value of the community, which had been present in some measure in the Puritan and Lockean theory. In this way it might be hoped to get back to what seemed the desirable values of individualism while discarding its excesses. The many attempts to do this, ranging, since Mill, from T.H. Green's idealism through many kinds of modern pluralism, have all run into serious difficulty.[1]

Bage would hardly make even a minor figure in this context. But it seems to me that in his own small way he was trying to resolve some of the difficulties posed by the political-economic theory of possessive individualism, trying to retain 'the desirable values of individualism while discarding its excesses'. In his attack on the 'calculator universal', his is a pre-Bentham revolt against Benthamism, though it should be remembered that Benthamism was no invention of Bentham's and that it was not all it came to mean in practice and in the popular mind.

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1. The Political Philosophy of Possessive Individualism, op.cit., pp.2-3.

It is perhaps true that no amount of romantic idealistic reconstruction could provide a solution to the problems posed by economic individualism, and this may have been one of the reasons for the sadness (and confusion) in Bage. Yet, as Eric Hobsbawm says:

> As thinkers within the terms of reference laid down by the economists and physicists, the poets [and the context would permit the substitution of 'poets' by 'romantics'] were outclassed, but they saw not only more deeply but also sometimes more clearly. [Further] The romantic critique of the world, though ill-defined, was not therefore negligible.[1]

1. The Age of Revolution (1962), Mentor Paperback, 1964, pp.310-311.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATURE AND ART AND THE LABOURING POOR

> The wages of a labouring man with a wife and half a dozen small children, Lady Bendham thought quite sufficient, if they would only learn a little economy.
>
> Nature and Art, 1796, I, p.125.

I

Introduction

Mrs. Inchbald's A Simple Story has been described as a novel of passion. Doctrine indeed occurs here as a tag at the tail-end and in the preface as a banner inscribed NECESSITY. Both are after-thoughts. Miss Milner's light-hearted vivacity ending in her infidelity to Lord Elmwood, her husband, and her daughter's passive but triumphant rectitude are not in any particular sense the outcome of their early education, as Mrs. Inchbald would have us believe at the end of the novel. Necessity, again, is not much of a philosophical concept here. It is 'want' or 'need' in the 'vulgar' sense of the word - her poverty which led her, as it did many another woman novelist of the period, to literary pursuits.

The novel does make its point. Miss Milner's sexual transgression receives something of the same sympathetic treatment as Hannah's in Nature and Art. Moreover, Miss Milner, as well as her daughter, helps undermine the rigid morality of Lord Elmwood and his mentor, Sandford, the priest. Religious or moral dogma, Mrs. Inchbald seems to make out, is not always an adequate criterion

by which to judge human conduct.

Yet this would provide but insufficient basis for Mrs. Inchbald's inclusion in the school of radical doctrinal novelists. Nature and Art, instead, even from the title, establishes her claim to a place here. It preaches, the critical commentary on the book runs, from the same text as Brooke's The Fool of Quality and Bage's Hermsprong. It exhibits like them the superiority of the 'natural man' and the 'state of nature' over the civilized man and artificial society. The contrast is embodied as between the attitudes and careers of the pampered, spoilt child of fortune and those of the simple and innocent child of nature.

In a sense this is all very well. But terms like natural and civilized man, the child of nature and the child of fortune, hardly give any adequate idea of what a book is about. The same text is amenable to different interpretations by different people and at different periods. In both Brooke and Bage, 'primitivism' and related ideas were a convenient form in which to comprehend and articulate (ever so lispingly) what was to them, at some level of consciousness, a significant aspect of social reality. Further, while Brooke used the nature-art formula to show some clash of interest (and the eventual reconciliation) between the landed aristocracy and the rich merchant, Bage used it, with all sorts of qualifications, to suggest norms for the enlightened industrialist.

Nature and Art, I think, has no more than a superficial resemblance to The Fool of Quality and Hermsprong. Mrs. Inchbald uses the same formula, as Brooke and Bage, to schematize altogether a different type of social conflict, namely, that between the rich

and the poor. The hypothetical attributes of the natural man are ascribed by her not to the conscientious man of business, either of the middling rank or of the class of merchant-princes, but to the meek and the indigent. The vices of artificial society are here embodied not so much in the aristocracy as in self-made men of the educated middle class, in those who have risen from poverty to be bishops and magistrates. The contrast here is mainly between two conditions of life, one of acquired affluence, the other of forced poverty. Poverty, for Mrs. Inchbald, is not a perpetual, time-honoured institution, but a concomitant, if not necessarily a corollary, of some people's acquisition of wealth and status. Bage is only vaguely, and casually, aware of this process when his Hermsprong ironically concedes that Britain has been passing through a progressive stage and goes on to say, 'You have built cities, no doubt, and filled them full of improvement, if magnificence be improvement; and of poverty also, if poverty is improvement'.[1] Mrs. Inchbald's novel is based on some understanding of this dual process remarked upon (but nowhere elaborated) by Bage. Her nature and art diagram is nearer Dickens's in Hard Times than Brooke's in The Fool of Quality or Bage's in Hermsprong.

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1. See above, p.243.

II

Summary

Nature and Art, like The Fool of Quality, is the story of two pairs of contrasted characters from two generations of the same family. But while in the earlier work one of the elders inherited the estate and title of an Earl and the other got into trade with an initial capital of £12,000, the elders in Mrs. Inchbald's novel are the sons of a country shop-keeper 'who had lately died insolvent.'[1]

On their father's death, William and Henry, still under twenty, set out on foot for London to procure 'by their industry a scanty subsistence'.[2] But even this modest objective was not realized, until Henry remembered and decided to use his fiddling talents as a means of livelihood.

With Henry's earnings to finance and support him, William, who had a smattering of Greek and Latin and a haughty frame of mind, went to university from where he graduated to a church-living of five hundred, and was soon, through the goodwill of the younger brother's patrons, promoted to a deanery. These brothers 'whom adversity had entwined closely together, prosperity [now] separated.'[3] The final breach came when William was married to the daughter of a Scottish laird. Henry had meanwhile married a public singer, 'one of his own rank in life,'[4] one who was no fit company for William's

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1. Nature and Art (NA from now onwards), 1796, I, p.1.
2. Ibid., I, p.1.
3. Ibid., I, p.28.
4. Ibid., I, p.25.

wife, 'a woman of family.'[1] He soon met a number of misfortunes. His wife died after giving birth to a son and not much later, in an accidental fall from horseback, he lost the use of his right hand and thus his ability to play on the violin. Too sensitive to make any overtures of friendship to the dean, he went with some other adventurers to Africa 'to try [his] fortune'[2] and took his young son with him. William on the other hand continued to enjoy his prosperity. He did make enquiries but Henry was reported to have been killed by native Africans. His wife, Lady Clementina, bore him a son, and he was also honoured by a bishop's friendship.

During his long voyage to Africa, Henry had providentially regained the use of his right hand, and though the other occupants of the ship were killed, he and his son were spared because of his musical talents. When after about eleven years, the weakness in his hand unfortunately returned, he was imprisoned. He however managed to send his son to England.

The young, untutored Henry, son of the fiddler, was not unwelcome at his uncle's. He asked awkward questions with raidcal, egalitarian implications, but was well-behaved and docile on the whole.

The simple child of nature and the spoilt child of fortune now grew up together. About the time they left college and arrived at the twentieth year, the dean bought a small estate in the village of

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1. Ibid., I, p.26.
2. Ibid., I, p.51.

Anfield near the country seat of Lord Bendham. Here the young people both fell in love, but while Henry aimed at cultivating the goodwill of Rebecca, the plainest, humblest and, incidentally, youngest of the four daughters of the Rev. Mr. Rymer, the curate of the parish, William set his heart on seducing Hannah Primrose,[1] a pretty girl and the only child of a cottager. They both succeeded in their respective projects.

Hannah soon discovered that she was with child by William, who was then, with the rest of the family, away to London for the winter. When on his return in summer they met clandestinely as usual, her agitation and the consequent refusal to accept his caresses provided him with a much looked for excuse to vow "never to see her again."[2] He kept his word too. For, during the winter, his parents had settled his marriage with Miss Sedgeley, a dependent niece of Lady Bendham's, and this prudent union, rich in connexions and prospects and promising no great love between the parties, was far more valuable to him than complete, disinterested devotion and affection.

While preparations for the marriage went on in secret - even Henry knew nothing of it, Hannah was secretly delivered of a son, and took it at night to the nearby woods to strangle it. But her courage failed her, and she could not pull the fatal knot. As providence and the novelist would have it, Henry most opportunely passed by, and discovered the child. Rejoicing that God had made him the instrument

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1. In Victorian reprints, she is Agnes Primrose and critics have sometimes referred to her as such.

2. NA, I, p.179.

of saving an innocent life, he took it to Rebecca and secretly entrusted her with its care, requiring her to look after it till he had found a nurse.

Hannah meanwhile lived in ignorance of the child's fate, suffered remorse, and kept hoping that William would relent and return and she would be able to share with him her misery and her sense of guilt. But 'serious matters' now occupied him: he had no time for trifles like early friendship and love.[1]

Henry's scheme with regard to the child, of whose parentage he was still in the dark, did not work out as desired. Instead, in an involved and not too credible sequence of events, Henry and Rebecca were accused and convicted of illegitimate connexion, and sentenced by the dean (in his capacity as a magistrate) to be united in wedlock. On the ground of his inability to maintain a wife, Henry prayed for and was granted reprieve for the present. In his Christian charity the dean found a place for him on a man-of-war.

Before he could leave, Henry once again became the instrument of providence. On William's wedding-day, Hannah, unable to bear any longer an already unbearable burden, went out at night to commit suicide, but Henry's chance appearance prevented her from executing her design. The parentage of the child was discovered, too. Unwillingly (scared of being imprisoned), yet privately to the dean, she disclosed the father's name. The whole episode was of course now hushed up, but Hannah kept the child, though this was to involve her in all sorts of difficulties.

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1. Ibid., II, p.7.

Henry had long desired to go to Africa on the odd chance of finding his father. This was one of the reasons why he had wished to postpone his marriage with Rebecca, which in any case seemed ruled out now. The dean did not want any marriage alliance in a mere curate's family and for the curate, the dean's desire was law. Henry also continued to be in disfavour with his uncle, who did not savour the fact that his son rather than his nephew was the culprit, and, therefore, when he expressed his desire to join the expedition to Sierra Leone, he was readily allowed to do so. He had also attained majority and was free to do what he liked.

While Henry faced all sorts of hazards on the sea, Hannah had her troubles on land.[1] At home she had made some awkward (but convincing to willing parents) explanation about the child. But the gossiping neighbourhood would not let them be in peace. Mother and child had to leave the village, and their removal only made it easier for the dean to forget his commitments towards them, slight as they were. William had already excused himself of all responsibility on the flimsy ground that by disclosing his part in the affair, out of pique at his marriage (as he thought and said), Hannah had relinquished all claim over him.[2]

Her parents wasted away and soon died. With Henry's departure for abroad, she had been deprived of a'kind and compassionate adviser'.[3] Accompanied by her son, she moved from one place to another, sometimes getting a decent job, most often not, till she

1. Ibid., II, p.97.
2. Ibid., II, pp.74-75.
3. Ibid., II, p.87.

landed in London, where, to confirm the early experience of the elder William and Henry, she found employment no easier to get than in the country.[1] If she found a job some time, even though a hateful one, it would not last. From poverty, she was driven to crime and was finally apprehended for circulating forged currency. Brought to trial before William, now a judge, she was sentenced to be hanged. She was so changed and had had so many aliases, that only after her execution, did William, from a broad sheet published on the occasion, discover her identity. He had no child from his marriage, and when he took steps to find his and Hannah's son, he learnt of his death from grief at his mother's execution. Remorse was his sole portion now.

A year later, the two Henrys, who had been so fortunate as to meet each other, reached home after numerous adventures on the sea. Though in a state of abject poverty, they felt grateful about it when they learnt that the make-believe happiness of the Williams and others of high society had completely collapsed. Lady Clementina had been dead these four years - no more in a position to flaunt her vanity. The dean who had been promoted to a bishopric had just died - unmourned by anybody. William the judge was parted from his wife. At Anfield they learnt of the death of Lord Bendham and Mr. Rymer. Death had undone so many - had reduced the proud and servile race to dust, leaving the field open to the poor and humble. Rebecca was 'just the same Rebecca as ever',[2] though her vain and jealous sisters had either died or grown old and ugly. In her

1. Ibid., II, p.102.
2. Ibid., II, p.190.

company, the Henrys enjoyed all the happiness in the world - all that the rich, proud, ambitious Williams had failed to. 'Not only resigned, but happy'[1] in their poverty, they extensively moralized on the happiness that poverty brings in this world and in the next, and on the senselessness of being discontented and thinking that the poor need sympathy or the amelioration of their condition.[2]

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1. Ibid., II, p.194.
2. Ibid., II, pp.191-203.

III

THE TWO NATIONS VS NATURE AND ART

(1)

In James Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald, published from autograph journals, etc., there is a vague and casual hint that Nature and Art was conceived while its author was engaged on Next Door Neighbours. A petite comédie staged by Colman junior in the summer of 1791, Next Door Neighbours is an adaptation, in one, of two French plays, Le Dissipateur by Néricault-Destouches, and L'Indigent by Mercier, to the latter of which Mrs. Inchbald's debt is by far the greater.[1]

Boaden says no more than that 'The interest [in the play] seems to have struck the author as capable of a far greater expansion.' To illustrate his point he cites only a few minor parallels between the play and the novel.[2] But though not long before its publication early in 1796, Mrs. Inchbald was still revising it on 2 January,[3] the novel had been completed by January 1794.[4] If we remember that on A Simple Story, from one kind of compulsion or another, Mrs. Inchbald worked off and on for over a decade, it should be permissible to assume that the

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1. In his Picture of Paris Mercier seems to have done what on a much larger scale Henry Mayhew later did for London. His translators also claim that 'Fagin and his school of pickpockets came from [Mercier's] Paris'. Louis Sebastien Mercier, The Picture of Paris, tr. by Wilfrid and Emilie Jackson, 1929, p.9.
2. James Boaden, Memoirs etc., 1833, I, p.294.
3. Ibid., II, p.2.
4. Ibid., I, p.315.

inception of Nature and Art took place not long after the completion of Next Door Neighbours. The titles of the French originals are of course suggestive, and the slightest possibility of the novel's derivation (direct or indirect) from them provides evidence (though perhaps extraneous) of what I have stipulated earlier, namely that the fashionable cult of 'primitivism' is used in the novel primarily as a convenient means of articulating the consciousness of the problem of poverty.

The approach to the problem is indeed far more mature in the later work than in the earlier. Next Door Neighbours is at best a sentimental study of how the poor could live on what the rich throw away. In the interests of a crude contrast, the mean, hovel-like habitation of the poor is placed, as in Mercier's play, next door to the well-furnished palace of the rich. The misery of a poor man's household alternates with the affluence, luxury, dissipation and the crowd at the rich man's revels. The poor work day and night and do not get the price of their labour - and scarcely enough to live on. This is all very well. After all, the poor man's life is not all idyllic peace and happiness and superior sensibility, though these virtues are not exactly denied them and though the rich seem to be as cursed in their affluence as the poor in the affliction of want.

In Nature and Art, these qualifications are only more emphatically iterated, as a more coherent faith and philosophy, if not quite consistently or convincingly. But there is no crude, sentimental juxtaposition here of wealth and poverty except some slight suggestion of it in the respective fortunes of Hannah Primrose

and her seducer, William Norwynne, particularly towards the end of Hannah's career. Moreover, riches and poverty here are not the outcome of artificial, melodramatic turns in events, of misplaced or lost wills, the good or bad attorney and the missing heir: they are viewed as a process which has a definite relevance in an age when, if people (even through hard work and application) were making fortunes and rising to the top of the social scale, for every one of such individuals there were many more who were (despite their honesty and industry) being pushed into still more inhuman conditions than they had known before. Even the short synopsis given above shows that the novel has its improbable sequences, its absurdities, its maudlin sentimentality. These tend to militate against but do not quite destroy the essential point.

In the following pages I intend to examine the validity of my main submission about the novel by a close analysis of what I think are the four lines of development in the plot. First, there is the career of the two brothers, whose common background is established in the first two chapters which serve as a kind of preamble. The differentiation in their fortunes that begins to be noted soon afterwards is fully worked out in a few quick-moving scenes. Next comes the descent of young Henry on the polite world of the dean and his friends. With action virtually suspended, this part of the novel is slow though never dull. This section, then, merges (and runs concurrently with) the dual development of the careers of the cousins, but before the parallel lines in this case, are fully drawn, Henry is sent off to Africa. His place on the road to poverty is taken up by Hannah, whose career makes up the

fourth, but the most important element in the novel. Her story is interesting in its own right but also provides a contrast to young William's rise in life. The pattern of this contrast is the same as in the case of the brothers and cousins - but this time the contrast is more fully worked out. In the first three strands that form the novel, the rather theoretical nature-art antithesis is still closely linked to, with varying emphasis, and is sometimes more pronounced than, the diagrammatic progress to poverty and wealth. In the Hannah-William axis, the theoretical frame completely breaks down.

With the super-imposed conclusion in the last chapters, the above form the five possible analytical divisions of the novel (or six, if we think of the first two chapters as an independent unit), though the lines of development overlap and it is not always possible to work out a correlation between these divisions and the run of chapters in the novel.

(2)

'A series of uncommon calamities', Mrs. Inchbald sums up a little more than half-way through the second volume,

> had been for many years the lot of the elder Henry - a succession of prosperous events had fallen to the share of his brother William -. The one was the envy, while the other had the compassion of all who thought about them. For the last twenty years William had lived in affluence bordering upon splendour, his friends, his fame, his fortune daily increasing; while Henry, throughout that very period, had, by degrees, lost all he loved on earth, and was now existing apart from civilized society - and yet - during those twenty years, where William knew one happy moment, Henry tasted hundreds.[1]

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1. NA, II, pp.115-6.

We may for the present pass over that important qualification in the last lines, that arbitrary apportionment of happiness. The rest of the passage makes it plain that in the respective careers of the brothers, Mrs. Inchbald is deliberately tracing the dual graph of prosperity and poverty. In fact, early in the novel, she gives ample indication of her intentions, when, at the end of the first chapter, she describes London as the metropolis

> which has received for centuries past, from the provincial towns the bold adventurer of every denomination; has stamped his character with experience and example; and, [more importantly] while it has bestowed on some coronets and mitres - on some the lasting fame of genius - to others has dealt beggary, infamy, and untimely death.[1]

In the last lines Mrs. Inchbald is evidently formulating what she sets out to exemplify. The phenomenon of uprooted people from the countryside emigrating to London, and ending up at the top or in the gutter, had of late been particularly noticeable. Viewed in this context, the passage is anything but a witty, irrelevant generalisation.

The dual process, so far as the brothers are concerned, is adequately traced when Henry leaves for Africa. Though the brothers are equally poor to begin with, William rises in life, acquires status, and is absorbed into the higher ranks through marriage with a woman of family - a vain society lady who would have lived and died a spinster, but for the upward-looking recruits to the middle ranks. Henry, on the other hand, is forced to go abroad and face the hazards on sea and in a hostile land. London bestows fame and riches and mitres (William eventually becomes a bishop) on one of

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1. Ibid., I, p.4.

the brothers. It does not so neatly bestow beggary, infamy and untimely death on Henry (it does on Hannah), though there is no reason except the contingency of the plot why the savages should spare him while killing the other occupants of the ship.

This contrasted pattern of development in the respective careers of the brothers also exemplifies the nature-art dichotomy. The origin of natural feeling in man is not always adequately accounted for by our novelists. Sometimes characters with exactly the same background, like George and Henry Osmond in Barham Downs, are endowed with disparate sentiments. But when the younger brother is favoured (as often), perhaps the attribution of moral and spiritual excellence to him is not exactly arbitrary. In all probability it is a reflection of the common opposition of the period to the feudal law of inheritance by primogeniture.

In Nature and Art, the brothers are in their raw youth and have both lived in the country before going to London. For this reason, they may legitimately and understandably be credited with an identical sensibility.[1] They have the same interests, the same feeling for their late father and are almost equally prone to tears. Some indication in the first chapter that William is the 'stronger' of the two, less given to 'melting' is but tenuous. In the second chapter, again, during their first year in London, they hardly manifest any distinctive features - except that, we learn, William

1. It may be relevant to note here that M. Dorothy George speaks of a common 'conviction [in the eighteenth century] that the London poor were vicious and dishonest' and points out that, for other reasons as well, new arrivals from the country were preferred for all sorts of jobs. London Life in the Eighteenth Century (1925), Peregrine Paperback, 1966, p.117.

had a smattering of Greek and Latin.

Mrs. Inchbald is perhaps rightly emphasizing here the common origin etc. of the brothers, so as to be better able to offset the later differentiation between them, both in terms of material acquisition and spiritual values. But we notice William's pride even before he is set off on the course of prosperity. The first instance of a diametricality between the brothers is no doubt conceived of as between natural feeling on the one hand and pride and conceit cultivated from a knowledge of Cicero on the other.[1] But we are left to infer from William's knowledge of Greek and Latin that, being the first-born (and this also contributes to his pride and the later estrangement with Henry, insofar at least as it gives him an awkward consciousness of dependence on a younger brother[2]), he had seen better days and been somewhat pampered before the shop-keeper, their father, became insolvent.

The subsequent instances of a difference between the attitudes of the brothers, 'whom adversity had joined together, [and]prosperity separated', are more pertinently the outcome of an increasing gap in their social position. Soon after his ordination, William began to detest Henry's mean occupation of a fiddler. When Mrs. Inchbald speaks of the violin, which had now become so odious to William that he could not look at it 'without instant emotions of disgust', as 'the very agent of his elevation', one suspects that the suggestive phrase is meant to denote the violinist as well. Despite 'his

1. NA, I, pp.10-12.
2. Ibid., I, p.21.

reverend brother's disrespect for his vocation', Henry, however, did not relax 'for a moment in his anxiety to advance him in his'. Yet, William's translation to a deanery, through Henry's efforts, 'at once placed between them an insurmountable barrier to all friendship, that was not the effect of condescension, on the part of the dean', who now remonstrated with his brother "upon his useless occupation", and told him of "the degradation it was to him, to hear his frivolous talent spoken of in all companies".[1] Henry could have asked for favours for himself when his patrons were pleased with him, but instead he kept William's interests above his own and the result was ingratitude and condescension on the part of William. (One thinks of Old Goriot being no more worthy of his elevated daughters and their new station in life after he had outlived his usefulness for them. One thinks of Bounderby and his mother.) The final breach came soon afterwards. Though Henry's marriage with a public singer was based on love and mutual regard and common interest, William disapproved of it, as it did not suit his dignity which was soon to acquire additional glamour from marriage with a woman of quality.

Perhaps the brothers were constitutionally, temperamentally different. Henry had 'a mind of singular sensibility'.[2] William, on the other hand, had'a steady countenance, a stern brow, and a majestic walk', 'a morose disposition', 'a proud and disdainful mind'.[3] Henry naturally possessed 'the virtues of humility and

1. Ibid., I, pp.21-23.
2. Ibid., I, p.38.
3. Ibid., I, pp.19-20.

charity, far above William, the profest teacher of those virtues'.[1] But surely the difference was aggravated by the increasing gap in their social position. After Henry had left for Africa, William did miss him for a while, but, Mrs. Inchbald informs us, 'The avocations of an elevated life erase the deepest impressions'.[2]

Our sentiments depend upon our external circumstances,[3] and one can safely say that the nature-art differentiation between the brothers is largely the outcome of a growing disparity in their material conditions. This is, however, not a case of an objective statement without suggestions of value-judgment. The moral for Mrs. Inchbald, though not for the reader, is plain enough. It is true that the rich are bad not from any fault of their own but because riches corrupt. They are bad nevertheless. Only the poor are capable of sympathy and fellow-feeling. We had best remain poor.

(3)

Once again, as in The Fool of Quality, the contrast in the second generation is more catching, and is in any case a more clear-cut elaboration of the contrast between the view-points of civilized society and the natural man - a contrast which, at least in terms of as much of the author's intention as can be read from

1. Ibid., I, pp.22-23.
2. Ibid., I, p.42.
3. See ibid., I, pp.66-67, and II, p.162. For a contrary point of view, see I, pp.115-6 and II, p.116.

the title, seems to be the most significant element in the novel.

William and Henry junior are both stock figures. Even at the early age of thirteen, William, the spoilt child of fortune, was 'a foolish man, instead of a wise child, as nature designed him to be'.[1] He was never once asked "What he thought?", but men were paid to tell him "how to think". 'He was taught to revere such and such persons, however unworthy of his reverence; to believe such and such things,however unworthy of his credit; and to act so and so, on such and such occasions, however unworthy of his feelings'.[2]

Mrs. Inchbald has an ambiguous sympathy for this 'unfortunate youth'.[3] His tutors, 'though they distorted his limbs and made his manners effeminate', 'did not interfere with the internal'. He could talk 'on history, on politics, and on religion; surprisingly to all who never listened to a parrot or a magpie - for he merely repeated what he had heard, without one reflection upon the use or probability of his report'. But he was 'not an idiot, or a brute', though 'when he imitated the manners of a man, he had something of the latter in his appearance - for he would grin and bow to a lady, catch her fan in haste if it fell, and hand her to a coach, as thoroughly void of all the sentiment, which gives grace to such tricks, as a monkey'.[4]

Young Henry had received all his education from his father,

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1. Ibid., I, p.45; also I, pp.67-68 where young Henry refuses to believe that William is the same age as himself.
2. Ibid., I. p.45.
3. Ibid., I, p.45. Where man is the creature of circumstance, some such sympathy even for the depraved is but natural.
4. Ibid., I, p.47.

nothing from books. Though he had always shown 'a quickness and willingness to learn', what he had been chiefly taught was to love and do good to his neighbours and to shun falsehood and 'frivolous vanity' of all sorts. He was wanting in politeness and 'proper respect' for rank,[1] was taller and handsomer, and from 'a simplicity spread over his countenance, a quick impatience in his eye, which denoted anxious curiosity, and childish surprise at every new object which presented itself, he appeared younger than his informed, and well-bred cousin'.[2] Though more engaging in his person and address, he was not so elegant or accomplished in his manners,[3] and soon showed himself the 'unpolished monster'[4] young William expected him to be. Like his predecessor Harry Moreland, he was often honoured with epithets like "simpleton", "poor silly boy" and "idiot". His ignorance and persistent enquiries drew 'immoderate laughter' from the civilized coterie at the dean's, who, because of his immense entertainment value, wished him no wiser.[5] But, free from vanity and self-consciousness that he was,[6] he continued to ask questions to satisfy his inveterate craving for knowledge, and to speak and act without reserve.[7]

Even after several months in England, 'the natural expectation of his improvement was by no means answered'.[8] Notwithstanding

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1. Ibid., I, pp.54-6.
2. Ibid., I, pp.61-62.
3. Ibid., I, p.66.
4. Ibid., I, p.60.
5. Ibid., I, pp.72-73.
6. Ibid., I, pp.62-63.
7. Ibid., I, pp.71-72.
8. Ibid., I, p.75.

his tractability,[1] and 'the seeming gentleness of his nature upon all occasions', in his enquiries and remarks, he 'demonstrated either a stupid, or troublesome disposition; either dullness of conception, or an obstinacy of perseverance in comments and arguments', Mrs. Inchbald ironically adds, 'that were glaringly false'.[2] In manhood he retained his natural simplicity 'which his early destiny had given him'. He still wondered at many things and sometimes ventured 'to give his opinion, contradict, and even act in opposition' to persons in authority, people who had 'the approbation of the world' and were placed in situations that claimed his 'implicit reverence and submission'.[3] Young William, now a man, likewise remained unchanged and 'was never known to infringe upon the statutes of good-breeding, even though sincerity, his own free will, duty to his neighbour, with many other plebeian virtues and privileges, were the sacrifice'.[4]

William had 'inherited' all the pride and ambition of the dean, Henry his father the fiddler's humility. Yet, 'so various and extensive is the acceptance of the word pride', the younger was at times even prouder than his elder cousin. He did not, 'to ingratiate himself into the favour of a man above him, stoop to one servility, such as the haughty William daily practised'.[5]

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1. Ibid., I, p.56.
2. Ibid., I, pp.75-6.
3. Ibid., I, pp.114-5.
4. Ibid., I, p.115.
5. Ibid., I, pp.115-6. A.O. Lovejoy defines two primarily senses in which the word/concept of "Pride" was understood in the 18th century: Self-respect, self-esteem and ambition to excel in the esteem of others. The distinction was a current commonplace. (Essays in the History of Ideas, Baltimore 1948, pp.62-8)

Young Henry's first appearance at the dean's, again, is not very different from the descent of any other radical inconnu or ingénu on the civilized world.[1] He regarded as curious oddities the appendages of rank and fashion, such as the dean's wig, the powder in Lady Clementina's hair, and her jewellery which, from his contempt for finery, he called "trumpery". He was no less respectful to the wig and her aunt's valuable ear-rings than to those who wore them. Until he had felt William's chin and found it smooth, he persisted in calling him "a little man" and refused to believe that they were the same age. He thought that if a son addressed his father as "Sir", as William did, this formal mode of address must lead to a diminution of natural affection.[2]

In all this Henry is the copy-book child of nature. With his mockery, expressed in words and deeds, of the manners of the upper class and of the rich parvenu, he does, like others before and after him, upset the apple-cart of complacent respectability and to that extent, even in the situations which do not show much invention, he is fresh, beatnik, interesting. But he goes further than this. He asks searching, Socratic questions about the lot of the poor. In the extended confrontation between the conventional world and the savage, the dialogues which relate to the subject of

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1. Innocence and its initiation (entree) into the world is a favourite pre-occupation of the authors of this period. With Fanny Burney, as with Jane Austen later, the initiation is a first step towards the final acceptance by the character of the values of the world to which he (mostly she) is introduced. This helps us place the politics of these authors. But even with the radicals, a final absorption in society, and at least a partial acceptance of its values, a certain decomposition of the militant dissent of the beginning is not uncommon.

2. NA, I, pp.63-74.

poverty[1] in fact preponderate over the stereotype of attacks on manners. Somewhat of a detailed disaussion of the first of these should be rewarding and should also suffice to indicate the general drift of the others.

The dean's coachman was dismissed for some unspecified lapse in his duty. Young Henry failed to understand how the dismissal could be meant as punishment. To be released, he argued, from the hard lot of a menial in an unsympathetic household should rather be a welcome relief.[2] The dean thereupon undertook to instruct him in the solemn mysteries of the distinction between rich and poor.

> "There are in society [he began] rich and poor; the poor are born to serve the rich".
> "And what are the rich born for?" [asked Henry]
> "To be served by the poor".
> "But suppose the poor would not serve them?"
> "Then they must starve."
> "And so poor people are permitted to live, only upon condition that they wait upon the rich?"
> "Is that a hard condition? or if it were, they will be rewarded in a better world than this".
> "Is there a better world than this?"
> "Is it possible you do not know this?"
> [Here follows an explanation from Henry of how his father had once started telling him about the future life and had then, in view of Henry's immaturity, refrained from doing so.]
> "The world to come" [resumed the dean] "is where we shall all go after death; and there no distinction will be made between rich and poor - all persons there shall be equal."
> "Aye, now I see what makes it a better world than this. But cannot this world try to be as good as that?"
> "In respect to placing all persons on a level, it is utterly impossible - God has ordained it otherwise."
> "How! has God ordained a distinction to be made, and will not make any himself?"[3]

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1. See Ibid., I, pp.76-9; 81-4; 101-2; 108-9; 116-7; 125-9; 150.
2. Ibid., I, p.77. When Mrs. Inchbald in her authorial capacity argues in the same vein (II, pp.103-5), one wonders if she is not as naive as her Henry.
3. Ibid., I, pp.77-9.

Henry's cross-examination of the dean reveals a highly sophisticated mind and, as on many another occasion,[1] the learned representative of the civilized world is left without an answer.

Such sophistication seems incompatible with the axiomatic naivety of the untutored savage. But it is immaterial whether someone from beyond the farthest reaches of civilization with its 'artificial' class-barriers could actually argue as above or not. Theoretically perhaps he could, for it is Henry's very ignorance of social distinctions, and his consequent inability to understand and accept them, that make him the advocate of a world without such distinctions. But probability obviously is not the question. Whether it had any basis in fact or not, 'primitivism' did after all provide a useful point of view for social criticism, and if ever it received the civilized man's entire and uncritical approval, then by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, as a recent authority on the history of ideas says, 'it was ... beginning to go (temporarily) out of fashion', and 'Rousseau contributed something to bring about its obsolescence'.[2] A discussion of the fluctuating

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1. See ibid., I, p.68; I, 96; I, 102 to cite some random examples.

2. A.O. Lovejoy and G. Boas; Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (1935), New York 1965, p.xi. Professor Lovejoy first advanced his thesis about Rousseau in his essay on 'The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality' (Modern Philology, xxi, 1923), reprinted in his Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore, 1948). Richard B. Sewall, 'Dr. Johnson, Rousseau and Reform', The Age of Johnson (1949), ed. by F.W. Hilles, 1964, pp.307-17, cites five more authorities (p.307n) and himself makes out a short but convincing case (pp.309-13) for the new approach. Rousseau, it seems, was misunderstood by his contemporaries and the English perfectibilitarians like Mary Wollstonecraft (The Rights of Woman, op.cit., p.18 where she says 'Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all was right originally; a crowd of authors that all is now right: and I, that all will be right'.) and her husband, (See Basil Willey, The Eighteenth-Century Background, Peregrine Paperback, 1965,p.222).

fortunes of the idea of primitivism,[1] even within the limits of a short historical epoch will be out of place here. One can safely postulate, however, that for most of our novelists it was a highly qualified and eclectic body of thought, and that these novelists did not accord the savage a hearty, unreserved accolade. Henry pere had taken care to keep from his son all that was pernicious in the conduct of Africans.[2] Robert Bage's Hermsprong, we have seen, is a cross between the savage and the enlightened businessman. The noble savage was after all in most cases an ideal construct (with flexible components) rather than a real being,[3] and where he provided a critical stance, he proved his bonafides in this respect

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1. For some of the problems involved, see Lovejoy and Boas, op.cit., especially the 'Prolegomena', pp.1-22, and Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', Puritanism and Revolution, op.cit., pp.50-122.

2. NA, I, p.55.

3. I doubt if it is worth while to adduce that the real life specimens of savages brought as exhibits or servants and slaves to Britain or met by travellers were either far short of or far above their fictional, literary counterparts. Wylie Sypher, Guinea's Captive Kings, op.cit., observes that 'the anti-slavery literature of the eighteenth-century England wilfully ignores facts' (p.4) and that the 'divergence between noble and ignoble Negro is due not alone to opposing points of view; the effort to transform "fact" into "literature" is characteristic of the eighteenth-century' (p.5). But as he himself recognizes, the noble Negro was primarily a symbol (p.2), and though its effectiveness was impaired by the extreme idealization, there was still room and verge enough for an awareness and expression of the shortcomings of savage life. Depending upon the author's ideology and alignment, the Negro tended to be painted as either all white or all black. But I suspect that even the literary Negro (or the literary savage) was hardly ever so monochromatic. There should be other more satisfactory reasons for the inferiority of the mass of poems and novels on the subject. In Wylie Sypher's work, a well-documented and useful compendium, the accent (wrongly I believe) lies on judging the lineaments of the literary Negro with reference to actuality, to what I would call a false realism. (cf. his discussion of Fidel's story in Bage's Man as he is, pp.292-3 and of Sandford and Merton, pp.272-4, to cite only two examples).

not merely by exemplifying a contrast but also by showing an occasional similarity between the manners of the civilized world and those of primitive communities. The dean's wig reminded the young Henry that savages also "stick brass nails, wire, buttons, and entrails of beasts all over them to give them importance."[1]

But, despite reservations, say, about 'the evils of untutored ignorance',[2] naivety, natural simplicity, freedom from prejudice and such other ideal adjuncts of the savage or the savage-substitute (the poor, the peasant, the child, or even the philosopher who lives in retirement or likes it) were upheld as norms, and were, for all practical purposes, compatible with a sophisticated, advanced, radical approach to the problem of reorganising the world. As Arthur Lovejoy puts it

> Most primitivism, especially in poetry, has, no doubt, been rather the expression - often the pessimistic expression - of an emotional nostalgia or an idyllic day-dream, than an instrument of propaganda; and one may in principle distinguish 'sentimental' from 'practical' primitivism, whether the example of the state of nature be found in the earliest age or in surviving primitive peoples. But the one naturally shades off into the other; a mood of intense dissatisfaction with some or all the characteristics of the civilized life of one's own time will obviously produce in some minds a hope and an endeavour to put an end to them. Thus ... primitivism need not be, and often has not been, hostile to a certain faith in progress.[3]

Perhaps I would not quite agree with Lovejoy when he goes on to say that 'a practical program' emanating from primitivism 'has

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1. NA, I, p.65. It is not clear whether the use of such distinctive gear is common to each member of the community or is meant to suggest the existence of a hierarchical set-up among the savages.

2. Caleb Williams, op.cit., p.41.

3. Lovejoy and Boas, op.cit., p.16.

necessarily been a program of reform wholly through elimination and reversion'.[1] He seems to me to be nearer the truth when he says that 'sentimental primitivism' 'naturally shades off into the [practical]', and I think that primitivism and the idea of progress do not only co-exist together, in a confused partnership as Lois Whitney has brilliantly and sometimes amusingly pointed out,[2] but that there is no logical, essential contradiction between the two.[3] It is not only a question of primitivism not being hostile to a certain faith in progress: both are in fact the outcome of 'the civilized man's misgivings about his performances, about his prospects - and about himself', his misgivings, doubts and apprehensions 'about the value of the outcome of civilization thus far, about the future to which it tends, and about himself as the author of it all',[4] and of his desire to change and 'improve' for the better, to get rid of the present mess and to usher in a better

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1. Ibid., p.17.
2. See Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, Baltimore 1934.
3. It is true no doubt that some people like Lord Monboddo and sections of the Anglican clergy deduced (or confirmed) from the idea of primitivism a theory of 'progressive deteriorationism'. But we are not concerned here with the fringe which is generally discussed for its amusement value, nor with the hide-bound sectors of the orthodox church opinion. Barring these, and as the prevalent philosophy of the eighteenth-century, 'primitivism', where it was not completely rejected (and this happened only rarely), went hand in hand, and, not very inconsistently, with the idea of progress. Even Lord Monboddo was not only a judge but made every possible effort to save his own precious skin (while the world was moving towards greater deterioration) by following a regimen which was almost universally accepted as providing an anti-dote to and cure for the curse and ills of society; and even inside the Anglican church ideas of progress were being advanced, if only as a mode of keeping pace with the times.
4. Lovejoy and Boas, op.cit., pp.ix and xi.

future. Perhaps even the most sentimental nostalgia did not always desire a complete reversal of the wheel of history,[1] and most primitivists would have agreed with what Thomas Paine says in the opening paragraph of his Agrarian Justice,

> To preserve the benefits of what is called civilized life, and to remedy, at the same time, the evils it has produced, ought to be considered as one of the first objects of reformed legislation.[2]

Be that as it may, the noble savage, in practice and at least with most of our novelists, was not only a critical stance from which to view the ills of existing or nascent[3] social order but a positive radical platform as well; and if it needed any great

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1. Rousseau is a case in point. Lovejoy has amply demonstrated that he was a 'perfectibilitarian' (See 'The Supposed Primitivism, etc.', op.cit.) Godwin, though he perhaps misunderstood his Rousseau, was not the first to try to combine 'primitivism' with belief in 'progress', and 'nature' with 'cultivation'. 'No man', said Hobbes, 'can have in his mind a conception of the future, for the future is not yet. But of our conceptions of the past, we make a future.' Quoted by Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', op.cit., p.55. Hill, however, points out that the ruling class tried to utilize the myths of lost rights and lost innocence. p.51.

2. Complete Writings, op.cit., I, p.609.

3. The qualification is essential, and involves no contradiction. Opposition to a particular variety of progress is the rejection neither of the idea nor the possibility of progress. A critique, whatever the source and shortcomings, of bourgeois industrial development, theoretically at least, looks forward to a still better future than that promised by capitalism. Hence the validity and value for us of much nineteenth-century anti-utilitarianism, despite its limitations (See on this subject, Granville Hicks, 'The Literary Opposition to Utilitarianism', Science and Society, Summer 1937, I, No.4, pp.454-71). It is part of my argument that we begin to notice in this period at least a partial awareness of the inhuman features of industrial growth. We should also remember that, far from implying a reversal, the demand for simple against complex forms, say, of government was consonant with the idea of economic laissez-faire, though, as Hobsbawm has pointed out, the machinery of the state, in practice, continued to gain in power, if only because it was 'shorn of its inefficient and interfering functions'. (The Age of Revolution, op.cit., p.230).

intellectual effort to reconcile 'primitivism' to the idea of progress, the onus hardly lay on our modest novelists, mostly men of mediocre talents - or women (worse still!).

To revert to the long dialogue between Henry and his uncle on the question of the rich and the poor in society and their respective functions, we cannot, then, quarrel with the young savage if with all his illiteracy he can still invent, inscribe or shout slogans of equality, fraternity and liberty, nor can we quarrel with the inevitable sacrifice of credibility and realism that such a situation involves. Mrs. Inchbald's manipulating presence in the passage is in fact only too plain. But she makes no claim to realism and is hardly likely to apologise for its lack,[1] if lack it is.

The dean is no doubt made to advance what seem to be absurd propositions, so as to allow Henry to make his point. But perhaps the statements attributed to the dean are after all not so fantastic. The Lord Bishop Richard Watson of Llandaff had about this time preached a sermon on 'The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both rich and poor', and published it with 'an Appendix containing Reflections on the present State of England and France'.[2]

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1. In another context (NA, I, pp.29-30), she makes it plain that the words within the inverted commas are not exactly as spoken by the character, but present, according to her, the best formulation of silent thoughts. This is only a legitimate device for clarity of expression, for abstracting and underlining what the author, the 'propagandist' thinks is the most significant in a particular situation. If it simplifies, it also makes the effect more telling.

2. cf. Tom Paine. Preface to Agrarian Justice, Complete Writings, op.cit., I, p.609.

In any case, whether the dean's opinions were actually held by anybody or not, the passage is a brilliant summing up, a succinct, terse statement of a social phenomenon that people were beginning to take particular notice of, the kind of statement that others were beginning to make too. Not before long Charles Hall, one of the lesser known British pre-Marxians, would show 'the poor labouring under the coercion of 'absolute necessity','[1] Hall makes his rich in effect say

> If you will labour for me in such and such a way, I will give you out of those things such as you stand in need of; but unless you will do these things which I require of you, you shall have none of them.[2]

The rich and the poor are probably not yet so far apart as to be called two nations, yet in the dialogue between Henry and his uncle we find an early awareness of a growing polarization, which in extent and intensity, was a particular development of recent years.[3] And the passage is not the only one of its type. Every now and then Henry asks inconvenient questions about the lot of the poor, though (and we shall come to that later) in the end he begins to think of the poor as blessed in their poverty.

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1. Alexander Gray, The Socialist Tradition, op.cit., p.265.
2. The Effects of Civilization on the People in European States (1805), p.44, quoted by Gray, op.cit., p.264. The title of Hall's work is significant. He seems to have given the problem of riches and poverty the same idealistic frame as Mrs. Inchbald, though Hall blames, as Bage on one occasion, commerce and manufacture for the growth of poverty.
3. The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor was set up in 1796, 'with the intention of making 'the inquiry into all that concerns the poor and promotion of their happiness a science'.' cf. Asa Briggs, op.cit., p.16. Eden's work on the poor came out in the same year.

Whether this insistent preoccupation with the rich-poor division in society is more significant than the sly and open attacks on, for example, the wig and jewellery of the fashionable world would perhaps depend upon the personal prepossession of the reader and the critic. But it certainly adds a new dimension to the contrast between nature and art - a dimension that we find missing in Henry Brooke and Robert Bage. Mrs. Inchbald's criticism of aristocratic manners does not stop short at being the criticism of wasteful expenditure. Nature here is not the complete tradesman, the perfect economist (or, with poverty, the school for case-hardening, breeding the spirit of industry, hard work, thrift, obedience), but the spokesman of the poor, of his right to at least a moderate subsistence and to better working conditions.

By themselves perhaps these dialogues on the question of the rich and the poor would not signify much. But viewed in conjunction with other elements in the novel, viz. the careers of the brothers and cousins and the story of Hannah, which show a similar preoccupation, in fact a preoccupation with success and failure in the race of life and not merely with two states or conditions of life, these dialogues (which are lively, yet do not seem to contribute much to the development of the story) fall in place.

(4)

When Mrs. Inchbald says that 'the contrast of the states of happiness between the two brothers, was nearly resembled by that of the two cousins, - the riches of young William did not render

him happy, nor did the poverty of young Henry doom him to misery',[1] she evidently views the story of the second generation as a variation on that of the first. The resemblance indeed does not consist only in point of happiness, for while young William finally becomes a judge, young Henry returns home with and like his father in abject poverty. It should also be remembered that young William's ambition and his subsequent rise in life complete the mischief begun by his tutors who had done but half the damage.

But if the widening gap between the attitudes of the brothers, the retention of natural morality by Henry and the steady degeneration of the values of the dean, is largely the outcome of a widening gap in their social position, the difference in the values of the cousins, is largely a matter of and is occasioned by the different modes of their early education.[2] The elucidation of the shaping influence of different modes of upbringing is the author's main concern in this part of the novel. But, as we have seen, proper education (or the lack of prejudices) has its validity, in this instance, because it leads to one's identification with the cause of the poor. Even in this respect, however, the subject seems to have no more than a limited interest for Mrs. Inchbald. Or, perhaps, the unorthodox Henry soon gets a little too big, a little too dangerous to dabble with over a long period, and has to be whisked away to Africa. Very little of him is exhibited in 'action' - action as involving the plot, except where he is merely an agent and not an active protagonist. He does not act on the same scale as Harry Moreland, or Hermsprong, or even Voltaire's

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1. NA, II, p.128.
2. Something is due to inheritance too.

ingenu. But the possibility of his being more natural than he is has been exhausted too. He cannot be improved upon. The potential of mischief in young William, on the other hand, is yet to be realized through his promotion from one office to another. Here even before Henry leaves for abroad, his role as exemplifying the process of pauperization is taken over by Hannah Primrose.

(5)

After pointing out that the contrast between the brothers closely resembled that between the cousins, Mrs. Inchbald describes the various stages by which William becomes a magistrate and from this she goes on to say, 'While William had thus been rising in fortune's favour, poor Hannah had been daily sinking deeper and deeper under fortune's frowns'.[1]

The first job Hannah got on leaving home is that of tending and feeding the cattle of a farmer. She was born of peasants, but, being the only child of industrious parents, she had been 'nursed with tenderness and delicacy, ill-suited to her present occupation'.[2] One thinks for a moment that Mrs. Inchbald is emphasizing here, as in A Simple Story, the benefits of education acquired in the school of adversity. Far from it, though, for Hannah patiently bore with every hardship and soon 'her tender hands became hard and rough, her fair skin burnt and yellow'.[3]

1. NA, II, p.130. See also II, p.159 where Mrs. Inchbald speaks of 'The progressive rise of William, and fall of Hannah'.
2. Ibid., II, p.89. About Hannah's peasant background, also see I, p.138.
3. Ibid., II, p.90.

Life on the farm was by no means idyllic, but it had its good points. 'By herding solely with the brute creation, she and her child were allowed to live together, and this was a state she preferred to the society of human creatures who would have separated her from what she loved so tenderly'.[1] There was also some security of tenure in this job. She impressed the owner of the farm with her diligence, and was retained all through spring and summer, and thus season after season passed till her young son could afford her assistance in her daily work'.[2]

But the 'good farmer', 'her preserver',[3] who had made her 'the companion of his stocks and herds' died and she was 'thrown once more upon society'.[4] Unable to find even such employment as her last, she decided to go to London, where, she was informed, she could gain her bread free from 'the cutting reproaches of discretion', and which was 'the only private corner where guilt could be secreted undisturbed - and the only public place where in open day, it might triumphantly stalk, attended by a train of audacious admirers'.[5] She also hoped to see William sometimes in all his glory.

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1. Ibid., II, p.91.
2. Ibid., II, p.91.
3. Ibid., II, pp.98,99.
4. Ibid., II, pp.97-98. Also see II, p.93, where Mrs. Inchbald reiterates the superiority of oxen, sheep and peasants over 'personages - i.e. persons of rank and fortune'.
5. Ibid., II, pp.98-99. It is not clear what variety of guilt Mrs. Inchbald is here thinking of. But William seems to be as much in her mind as Hannah. One remembers that Dickens frequently contrives to discover some consanguinity between the respectable and wealthy citizen and the ordinary criminal.

With these ideas, then, Hannah 'took a three weeks' journey to that perilous city on foot, cheering as she walked along, her innocent and wearied companion', her son. While William wallowed in luxury, his first and his only child, trudged through 'frost and snow'.[1] Of the hardships of the journey we hear nothing more; but evidently this is not the kind of journey on foot that Hermsprong makes to London, for pleasure and to save money.[2] Instead, it reminds one of Hugh Trevor's boyhood escape from the farm where he was an apprentice, and of David Copperfield's escape to his aunt's house in Dover.

For Hannah and her son, however, there is no comfort at journey's end. In the countryside there were perhaps still a few pockets of kind homeliness, where it was possible to secure a nominal happiness, where poverty and labour had their alleviating concomitants, where not everybody would be willing to cast stones at the fallen woman. But this sanctuary, if sanctuary it was, was fast being invaded and people were being hunted out of it. Life at the farm had its troubles, but such as it was it could not last and life in London, Hannah soon discovered, was much worse. Only after numerous disappointments was she accepted as a domestic servant 'of all work', and that also 'on condition of her receiving

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1. Ibid., II, p.101.

2. See Hermsprong, op.cit., II, p.39.

but half the wages usually given'.[1] Here in a basement kitchen 'hid from the cheerful light of the sun' and only a little less exposed to 'damp and noxious vapours' than if she were working in 'dark and unwholesome mines', she was 'doomed to toil from morning till night, subjected to the command of a dissatisfied mistress'.[2] But even this hard lot of 'honest' toil was not to be hers for long. When it came out that she had a child she sometimes visited, her mistress, a citizen's wife, asked her to leave the place - a place 'where, to have lived one hour, would have plunged any fine lady in the deepest grief'.[3]

If crime stalked the streets of London, it certainly found no quarter in the puritanical household of a merchant.[4] Hounded by the sanctimonious morality of the world or its pretense and by economic necessity (- NECESSITY to which Mrs. Inchbald pays homage in the preface to A Simple Story), Hannah was left with no option but to become a street-walker and was finally arrested, convicted

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1. NA, II, p.103. See J.H. Plumb, op.cit., p.153: 'The [village] poor drained away to towns, to the boom towns of the North, or to London with its unsatiable demand for domestic servants'; and M. Dorothy George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, Peregrine Paperback, London, 1965, Ch.3, specially pp.116-20.

2. NA, II, p.103. Of dark and unwholesome mines, Mrs. Inchbald is not likely to have known anything but from romances. Of the existence of dark cellars in a London household she was aware at first hand or at second from her sister's experience.

3. Ibid., II, p.105. One irresistibly thinks of Jane Austen and the household of the Prices.

4. See (from a later day) Alton Locke, Ch.I, on the rigid upbringing in the household of a retail tradesman's widow, Alton's mother. Also, Carl Philip Moritz, Journeys of a German in England in 1782, (1785), 1965, p.28. On arrival in London, Moritz stayed with a tailor's widow - two sons, John and Jeremiah. 'Once, in [John's] presence, I happened to be humming a merry tune: he stared at me in surprise and reminded me that it was Sunday. And so, not to give him a wrong impression, I answered that in the confusion of my journey I had forgotten what day it was'.

and hanged for circulating counterfeit bank-notes.

The sentence was passed by William, who had in the interim risen to be a magistrate. With his prospects of marriage with Miss Sedgeley and a career that such union promised he had soon shaken off 'every little remaining affection, even all pity, for the unfortunate, the beautiful, the sensible Hannah', 'this weak, this unprincipled woman'.[1] 'Connections, interest, honours, were powerful advocates. His private happiness William deemed trivial, compared to public opinion'.[2] Not that he was utterly devoid of feeling for her, but considerations of 'places, pensions, titles, retinues'[3] came first, 'Serious matters' now occupied him, trifles like early friendship and love must make room for the business of the world, for knowledgeable men 'of approved sense', and 'business, pleasures, new occupations, and new schemes of future success' dissipated 'all unwelcome reflections'.[4]

If wealth, power and position corrupt, perhaps a certain initial depravity is an essential condition for their acquisition. The sacrifice William had made in early life 'of every tender disposition' became, ironically, the cause of his promotion in life. 'His marriage had been the very counterpart of his father's; and

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1. NA, I, p.168.

2. Ibid., I, pp.168-9. From the outset the marriage was doomed to be one, like the dean's and his wife's (cf. I, p.85), where what subsists 'between parties allied by what is falsely termed prudence' is 'pretended regard, and real indifference, sometimes disgust'. If William was swayed by worldly considerations of prudence, Miss Sedgeley was frmm the first determined "to make a bad wife", and not to "care a pin for my husband". "I will dress and visit", she thought, "and do just as I like - he dares not be unkind because of my aunt". (Cf. I, pp.166-9).

3. Ibid., I, p.170.

4. Cf. Ibid., II, pp.5-10.

having no child to create affection to his home, his study was the only relief from the domestic encumberance, his wife': and 'by unremitting application there (joined to the influence of the potent relations of the woman he hated) he at length arrived at the summit of his ambitious desires'. 'Striding through a list of rapid advancements, in the profession of the law, at the age of thirty-eight he found himself raised to preferment, such as rarely falls to the share of a man of his short experience - he found himself invested with a judge's robe; and gratified by the exalted office, curbed more than ever that aversion, which her want of charms or sympathy, had produced against the partner of his honours'.[1]

Now even here one no doubt feels at times, in Hannah's herding with cattle for example, that Mrs. Inchbald is trying to contain the story within her prescribed frame of nature and art. Rebecca and Henry vs. Hannah and William, too, may be viewed as an extension of the same formulary contrast, with one pair achieving happiness through their conformity to natural morality, the other being doomed to misery of one kind or another, because they succumbed to temptation, because they were both unprincipled. But Hannah and William postulate a contrast in their own right. Hannah is in fact as much nature as Rebecca. William's sacrifice of her is the sacrifice not only of all that was good in himself but also of natural beauty and affection for the sake of preferment and an artificial, decked up doll of a Miss Sedgeley.[2]

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1. Ibid., II, pp.129-30. Cf. also II, p.170: 'stedfast, alert, unshaken in the pursuit of honours, [William] neglected not the lesser means of rising to preferment - his own endowments'.

2. See ibid., II, pp.5-6.

Hannah is moreover on the same side as young Henry. His 'insufferable ignorance' is matched by her 'rustic folly'.[1] She excited his 'deepest compassion' which proceeded from some similarity in their situations.[2] Mrs. Inchbald opens the thirty-fifth chapter with

> While the bishop and his son were sailing before prosperous gales on the ocean of life, young Henry was contending with adverse winds, and many other perils on the watery ocean - yet still his distresses and dangers were less, than those which Hannah had to encounter on land. The sea threatens an untimely death; the shore menaces calamities from which death is a refuge.[3]

'Untimely death' - the phrase recalls to mind a passage at the beginning of the novel, a passage we have already quoted, where Mrs. Inchbald says that London bestows upon some mitres, etc., while on others 'beggary, infamy, and untimely death'. Henry had braved the seas not for economic but sentimental reasons. Yet Mrs. Inchbald seems to realize here that the poor in London, though their lot is more severe, and the poor driven abroad are aspects of the same social reality.

Hannah's story has no doubt received some notice from critics. But their attention has centred on the trial scene and its controlled presentation, and on the anomaly of the seduced being judged by the seducer. To my mind the significance of the story lies in that it traces the process of the pauperization, the economic alienation of the peasant - a process which had already

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1. Ibid., II, p.68.
2. See ibid., II, pp.75-6.
3. Ibid., II, p.97.

found its classic statement in Goldsmith's Deserted Village (1770) and which continued to occupy people's mind a century later, in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891), for example. Hannah's career, her seduction, her work at the farm, and her later prostitution of herself, do in fact suggest, more in some parts than in others, an extensive, and cogent parallel with the career of Hardy's 'pure woman', and as in Tess, her ruin has been brought about by one of the new rich.

Her hard life at the farm, in the kitchen, and later on as a prostitute and criminal (though real life parallels would not be hard to dig out) comes to us as a worn out novelistic cliché. Schematic, cliché-ridden, melodramatic the story no doubt is. Even the competent management of the trial scene is in a sense only a local achievement, for soon afterwards the melodramatic potential of the story is let loose, with Hannah's story being published in a broad sheet, her appeal to William to take charge of their son, and the latter's death from grief at her mother's execution. Yet, at times because of the very crudity of Mrs. Inchbald in her handling of the material, a certain artistic effect has been achieved. While tracing Hannah's life of suffering in London, the author constantly keeps us in touch with William's prosperity. She is perhaps trying to exploit here, as in her Next Door Neighbours, the sentimental contrast between the rich and the poor. But, apart from the fact that riches and poverty here are not two states and not the outcome of misplaced wills etc., the crude juxtaposition serves as a constant reminder of William's responsibility in Hannah's

ruin. Moreover, if it were not for her continued attachment to him (and generally her point of view has been adopted for presenting his glamorous life: she keeps hiding behind corners and waiting for hours for him to pass in state), perhaps she might still have stayed in the country and retained her innocence, or rather that part of it which she still had before she came to London. It is as the climax, not only of a personal story,but of a social process, that the rather naive irony of the seduced being judged by the seducer acquires significance.

William and Hannah, thus, are meant to trace over again the same contrasted pattern of development, the same dual graph of some people's success and other people's failure (the first, in some cases at least, being the consequence of the second) as the brothers and the cousins. But here the contrast has been more thoroughly, even remorselessly worked out. While the progressive rise of the two Williams has been fully dealt with, only in Hannah's case has the progressive deterioration, moral and material, been fully illustrated, only in her case does the process of pauperization receive an extensive treatment. Hers is the most articulate element at least on one side in the total pattern of the novel. Moreover, the idealistic tags of the other stories do not find much place here. The nature-art framework has in fact completely broken down, is inadequate to comprehend the realism of Hannah's story. Hannah and William may be viewed as representing nature and art, but together they symbolize the spoliation of nature by art rather than establish the superiority of nature over art. 'Nature', again, is capable of affording at least a 'spiritual'

happiness to the Henrys. Hannah's destiny, instead, is allowed no such extenuation. Perhaps some kind of poetic justice is being meted out. But her fall from relative happiness and prosperity is viewed not as a nemesis, but as undeserved and unjust, the outcome of the intolerance, the callousness of people who have no objection to sexual transgression per se. Hannah suffers remorse, but the author never really condemns her.

(6)

'It was not until the French Revolution', says George Rudé, 'that such conditions [the lot of the poor] began to be the constant concern of press, governments and popular assemblies'.[1] Even before this the poor had emerged as a menace to law, order and property, had posed a problem that demanded one kind of solution or another. We find all sorts of people, from different motives, writing on the subject. Magistrates who found them a constant threat to the property and person of the 'peace-loving' citizen; 'philanthropists' who were worried over the misuse of public money and the poor-rates and the mismanagement of hospitals and work-houses, and who also felt concerned that the death-rate among the children of the poor did not allow for a quick replenishment of the navy and the army; businessmen who needed an army of wage-earners, men, women and children all - it would not be difficult to cite examples, from at least the middle of the eighteenth century

1. The Eighteenth Century, op.cit., p.8.

onwards, of people who discoursed on the condition of the poor. By the last decade of the century, we have seen, the lean years of the war with France, among other reasons, had accentuated the problem. In 1792, Bage probably had no reason to complain, as his Lindsay in Man as he is does, that the poor are forgotten in 'all our disquisitions, political and moral'.[1]

In Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art the subject comes up for an elaborate treatment, it occurs here not as a casual, incidental something, but is woven into the very warp and fabric of the novel. Despite her preoccupation with the fashionable cult of 'primitivism', she is concerned here, above all, with the problem of some people's rise to wealth and position at the cost of others, and her concern is substantiated, with varying emphases, by all the strands in her story. William the elder builds up his career on the sacrifices of his youngerbrother, who, perhaps even because he neglected to promote his personal interests, to ensure for himself a steady and lasting income while the going was good, was eventually obliged to go abroad and face the possibility of untimely death. The nature vs. art theme in this instance is subsidiary to the contrasted graph of their careers, but it is very much there. In the case of the cousins, it becomes, more or less, the primary subject of exposition, it occurs in a somewhat undiluted form so to speak. The contrast between the enrichment of some and the pauperization of others is hardly important here. Even so, in the verbal confrontation between the civilized world and the natural man, Mrs. Inchbald shows almost a nagging interest in the lot of the poor. Young Henry's partizanship with the impoverished is insistent enough to predicate

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1. See above p.242.

for his author a different interpretation of the nature-art formula from that made by Henry Brooke or Robert Bage. She is no doubt working within the same framework and tries to keep faithfully to her prescribed limits. But the framework absolutely breaks down when she comes to treat of Hannah, whose sacrifice is an essential pre-requisite of young William's promotion to a judgeship.

IV

'THE KINGDOM WITHIN'

(1)

Mrs. Inchbald's young Henry has a 'troublesome mind'. His quips, we shall soon see, would not always bear a close, critical scrutiny, but they express the kind of sentiments which could have easily exasperated those upper class savants, and their like, who regarded as subversive Hannah More's efforts at educating the poor. Even on the left, I think, not many would have been prepared to accept all the implications of Henry's logic, or Henry senior's approval of the African natives for killing the European colonisers. At an early date, a radical, say, like Timothy Hollis could still argue against education for the poor.[1] At a later day, in 1792 for example, Robert Bage's concern for the poor was limited to prescribing rules of economy. His attitude is patently patronising, and equality is, as we have seen, anathema to him.[2]

Mrs. Inchbald shows some concern for the material welfare of the poor, not only for their morals. She also shows symptoms of a militant partizanship with them. Yet, concurrently with this 'extreme' radicalism, we find in her, throughout, an advocacy of

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1. 'Mr. Hollis declares with me against all hereditary honours and thinks there should be but two orders in a state, but surprised me by saying that the lower class of people should not be taught even to read and write. I agree with him they should not be educated as they are ..., but think they can neither know their own temporal rights nor mind their eternal concerns without being able to read and write'. The Diary of Sylas Neville, op.cit., p.14, entry for June, 1767.

2. See above pp.292-3.

humility, tractability, docility as desirable virtues and by the end of the novel this latter element has got the better of the former, the militancy is diluted and we meet with, instead, a panegyric on the advantages of religious resignation.

(2)

> How much indebted are we to providence, my children, who, while it inflicts poverty, bestows peace of mind; and in return for the trivial grief we meet in this world, holds out to our longing hopes, the reward of the next![1]

So Henry senior, towards the end of the novel, to his son and Rebecca. Peace of mind in this world and prospects of a life still better in the next are more than ample compensation for the few trivial inconveniences that the poor experience.

The sentiment is occasioned by what the two Henrys, on their return from Africa, learn of the fate of upper class characters in the novel. After numerous adventures on the sea, and 'ill success through life',[2] Henry senior, accompanied by his son, returned home 'in the most abject state of poverty'[3] only to find that the elder William, by then a bishop, had just died. Shorn of his pride and glory, humbled by death, William was to his younger brother now no more the dean or bishop, but just plain William as he was when they had lived together at home, had together walked to London, and had together almost perished from want.[4] Lady

1. NA, II, p.194.
2. Ibid., II, p.164.
3. Ibid., II, p.163.
4. Ibid., II, p.171.

Clementina, that 'worldly woman', they later discovered, had as well 'quitted the world for ever'.[1] It was her vanity that had caused her death. She had caught a fatal cold by wearing a new fangled dress that did not half cover her.[2] The Rev. Mr. Rymer who had never tired of asserting his authority over poor Rebecca was dead too - 'how trivial now appeared all, for which he gave way to such excess of passion'.[3] Lord Viscount Bendham, with an impressive but undeserved monument over his grave (evidence of how art can be prostituted to wealth[4]), had been long buried and past all his worldly glory. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

It would seem as if the poor would never die, but though they do, they have prospects of a better life in the next world. 'The signals of death, while they humble the rich, inspire the poor with pride'.[5] What they look forward to is not only equality in the next world but a place of pride, a place near the throne as the rich cannot have. If after the Bishop's death, there was still a difference between him and the public singer, Henry's wife, whom he had refused to invite to his table, she had perhaps the advantage.[6]

Not only in the next world, but here and now, are the poor better off than the rich. The Henrys did not try to get in touch

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1. Ibid., II, p.173.
2. Ibid., II, p.174.
3. Ibid., II, p.185.
4. Ibid., II, p.186.
5. Ibid., II, p.169.
6. Ibid., II, p.172.

with the surviving member of the more prosperous branch of their family. Instead they went straight to Anfield where young Henry was united to Rebecca, where they lived 'not only resigned but happy in their elation',[1] and considered themselves at least 'comparatively blest'[2] when they thought of how the rich in the neighbourhood had failed to enjoy the abundance of life's comforts and luxuries they possessed. Rebecca told them of Hannah's fate, but Mrs. Inchbald ignores its inconvenient moral (both life and death had undone Hannah, though she did not belong to the world of the rich, and the proud) and goes on to speak of the remorse and 'the weariness of continued prosperity'[3] that young William suffered from. Similarly, when Rebecca, in her narration of the events in the neighbourhood over the past so many years, comes to Lord Bendham, we learn that he had died 'from the effects of intemperance; from a mass of blood infected by high seasonal dishes, mixed with copious draughts of wine - repletion of food and liquor' which, Mrs. Inchbald takes over, are 'not less fatal to the existence of the rich, than the want of common sustenance to the lives of the poor'.[4] His lady still lived, but in ignominy and neglect, ruined by her passion for gaming. Miss Sedgeley that was had left her husband William and was married to somebody else.

> Who am I to condemn you, O Dives,
> I who am as much embittered
> With poverty
> As you are with useless riches?

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1. Ibid., II, p.194.
2. Ibid., II, p.191.
3. Ibid., II, p.192.
4. Ibid., II, pp.192-3.

Perhaps Ezra Pound is not quite right there. He certainly does not go all the way with Mrs. Inchbald. For her, poverty, instead of being as cursed as wealth, is in fact even a more glorious state. Lazarus has the better of Dives not only in heaven, but here and now he enjoys an enviable position.

In the last chapter of the novel, the three inmates of the happy Anfield household - 'a stinted repast of milk and vegetables, a glimmering light by a little brushwood on the hearth'[1] -, exchange similar sentiments on the condition of the poor. 'Exempt both from patronage and from controul - healthy, alive to every fruition with which nature blesses the world; dead to all out of their power to attain, the works of art - susceptible of those passions which endear human creatures one to another, insensible to those which separate man from man',[2] -, they live happily together. Father and son spend their time in 'cheerful labour' in fishing and 'the tending of a garden',[3] and by selling fish and fruits in the next market town they procure a reasonable living.[4] Henry senior gloats over the happiness that is theirs, and doubts if there can be any other three persons as happy as them. 'It is the want of industry', he says, 'or the want of reflection, which makes the poor dissatisfied. Labour gives a value to rest, which the idle[5] can

1. Ibid., II, p.191.
2. Ibid., II, pp.196-7.
3. Ibid., II, p.197.
4. Ibid., II, p.197.
5. Mrs. Inchbald does not seem to make any distinction between those who are idle by choice and those who are idle by compulsion.

never taste; and reflection gives to the mind content, which the unthinking can never know'.[1] Young Henry once considered poverty a curse, but after his thoughts became enlarged, after he had associated with the rich for years, and now mixes with the poor, his opinion has undergone a change. He has 'more real pleasure at work with my fellow labourers, and in this cottage', than 'during my abode at my uncle's; during all my intercourse with the fashionable, and the powerful of this world'. When Rebecca points out that 'the poor have not always enough', her husband undertakes to enlighten her. Who had enough? His uncle, his cousin, Lady Bendham? And of what use was it to them? "Were we", he says, "my Rebecca, of discontented minds, we have now too little. But conscious, from observation and experience, that the rich are not so happy as ourselves, we rejoice in our lot". When he had first come to England as a boy, he had pitied the poor; now with his judgment matured, he pities the rich. He knows now that "there are near as many persons perishing through intemperance, as starving with hunger - there are as many miserable in the lassitude of having nothing to do, as there are, bowed down to the earth with hard labour - there are more persons who draw upon themselves calamity by following their own will, than there are, who experience it by obeying the will of another. Add to this, the rich fear dying, so much, they have no comfort in living".[2]

The last passage is a curious mix-up. It shows the awareness of a serious flaw somewhere in the organization of society which

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1. NA, II, p.198.
2. Ibid., II, pp.198-200.

overloads some with work, and either cannot find employment for those willing to work or allows people to rest in idleness. It also shows that where acquisitiveness is an end in itself, material possessions, far from promoting the enjoyment of life, in fact rule it out. Yet the moral of all this awareness is rather disturbing. Conformity, acceptance, acquiescence - is held up as the norm. And once again the comfort of dying with a quiet conscience is regarded as a fair recompense for the miseries of this life. The poor therefore do not fear dying. They are not worried about any possible loss by sea or land, because they have nothing to lose. How enviable! Prospects of a better world apart, they are in a position to taste the joy of 'a kind word, a benevolent smile, one token of esteem, from the person, whom we consider our superior', and from its rarity, such token is all the more honourable.[1] Of the innumerable pleasures of poverty, the rare patronizing benevolence of the rich is not the least.

> Despite all these advantages, horror of horrors, those in poverty, ungrateful as they are, murmur against that government from which they receive the blessing;[2] and, unlearned as they are, would attempt to alter it. - We leave to the physician the care of restoring our health, we employ the soldier in fighting our battles, and the lawyer in the defence of our fortunes, without presuming to interrupt them in their vocations - then, why not leave, and without molestation, those to govern a kingdom who have studied the science of politics? For though a physician may not always be skilful, a soldier may not always have courage, a lawyer not always honesty, or a minister always good fortune - yet,

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1. Ibid., II. p.201.
2. The second edition (1797) has a different conclusion from the first. At this point, in the second edition, the elder Henry takes up and puts the blame for the ingratitude of the poor on their defective education (See II, pp.201-2.)

> we should consider, that it is not upon earth we are to look for a state of perfection - it is only in heaven - and there, we may rest assured, that no practitioner in the professions I have named, will ever be admitted to disturb our eternal felicity.[1]

The lawyer, the physician, the soldier, and the statesman are damned for ever. There would never be a place for them in heaven. When Mrs. Inchbald suggests that here in this world we should leave to them the care of our affairs (as also when she speaks of the rarity of a smile from social superiors), she is being ironical. But a sense of the very fatuity of the expectations from these people makes her reliance on a world to come the more complete.

Mrs. Inchbald's position in the last chapters of the novel is easily summed up. It is silly to think of poverty as an evil. The rich suffer from want of feeling and fellowship, and 'the weariness attached to continued prosperity'. More people die from intemperance and the luxurious life made possible by wealth than from the want of food and raiment. And from the continued anxiety of looking after their affairs, the rich cannot in any real sense enjoy the pleasures of life. The poor always have peace of mind and can rely on the love of their fellow beings and possibly derive some pleasure from the kindness of their superiors. They have a better and happier lot here and now. They have nothing to lose and much to gain from death which they meet with a clear, untroubled conscience. While, unmourned, the rich die and go to hell, the poor instead can look forward to preferment in the next world. So far as this world is concerned, their salvation lies in some kind of a reliance on the good will of their betters - the upper and middle

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1. NA, II, pp.201-3.

class legislator. We have here perhaps a not very well formulated statement of that paternalistic belief in reform coming from the top - a belief that, at a later day, the Christian Socialist Kingsley shared with the Tory Disraeli.

(3)

The moral sentiments at the end of the novel, Mrs. Inchbald's prescription of quietism, do not come entirely as a surprise. From the outset, there is a lot to anticipate her final capitulation, whether or not it follows and can be legitimately deduced from what has gone before. Her values are, from the beginning, those of religion and contentment. Humility is the chief attribute of the older Henry and tractability an important element in young Henry's make-up. The insistence on a scanty, moderate subsistence rules out the need for rebellion, or the assertion of claims and rights, though it also rules out ambition. Henry senior's marriage with a public singer, 'one of his own rank in life', is meant to demonstrate the superiority of love and affection over convenience and snobbery, but it also reveals a traditionalist, religious approach that people should keep to their station in life - it harks back to the old days when everybody had his assigned, fixed, more or less static place in society, when trades ran in the family from one generation to another.

On the question of death, again, we find fairly early in the novel a similar sentiment as towards the end. The dean had refused to invite his younger brother's wife to his table, and, when after

her death a fleeting thought came to him that had he known she was so near her death, he might have been generous towards her, Mrs. Inchbald moralises that there is perhaps 'in death something that so raises the abjectness of the poor, that, on their approach to its sheltering abode, the arrogant believer feels the equality he had before denied, and trembles'.[1] Death, the universal leveller, is involved here as a terror to the rich, and is not meant to inspire the poor with a sense of equality, with pride and the alluring prospects of a better world. Yet the principle is the same as towards the end of the novel.

The passage I am going to quote now and which I think is by far the most brilliant example of vigorous and meaningful repartee in the novel has its weak points too. It ends with that paternalistic reliance on the legislator that we find again at the end:

> The wages of a labouring man with a wife and half a dozen small children, Lady Bendham thought quite sufficient, if they would only learn a little economy.
>
> "You know, my lord, those people never want to dress - shoes and stockings, a coat and waistcoat, a gown and a cap, a petticoat and a handkerchief, is all they want - fire, to be sure, in winter - then all the rest is merely for provision".
> "I'll get a pen and ink", said young Henry, (One day when he had the honour of being at their table) "and see what the rest amount to".
> "No, no accounts", cried my lord, "no summing up: but if you were to calculate, you must add to the receipts of the poor my gift at Christmas - Last year, during the frost, no less than a hundred pounds".
> "How benevolent!" Exclaimed the dean.
> "How prudent!" Exclaimed Henry.
> "What do you mean by prudent?" asked Lord Bendham. "Explain your meaning".
> "No, my lord," replied the dean, "do not ask for an explanation: this youth is wholly unacquainted with our customs; and though a man in stature, is but a child in intellects. Henry, have not I often cautioned you - "

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1. NA, I, p.30.

> Whatever his thoughts are upon this subject", cried Lord Bendham, "I desire to know them."
> "Why then, my lord", answered Henry, "I thought it was prudent in you to give a little; lest the poor, driven to despair, should take all".
> "And if they had they would have been hanged".
> "Hanging, my lord, our history, or some tradition, says, was formerly adopted as a mild punishment, in place of starving."
> "I am sure", cried Lady Bendham, (who seldom spoke directly to the argument before her) "I am sure they ought to think themselves much obliged to us."
> "That is the greatest hardship of all." cried Henry.
> "What sir?" Exclaimed the earl.
> "I beg your pardon - my uncle looks displeased - I am very ignorant - I did not receive my first education in this country - and I find I think so differently from every one else, that I am ashamed to utter my sentiments".
> "Never mind, young man", answered Lord Bendham: "we shall excuse your ignorance for once. Only inform us what it was you just now called, the greatest hardship of all".
> "It was, my lord, that what the poor receive to keep them from perishing, should pass under the name of gifts and vanity. Health, strength, and the will to earn a moderate subsistence, ought to be every man's security from obligation".
> "I think a hundred pounds a great deal of money" cried Lady Bendham, "and I hope my lord will never give it again."
> "And so do I," cried Henry, "for if my lord would only be so good as to speak a few words for the poor as a senator, he might possibly for the future keep his hundred pounds, and yet they never want it."[1]

This is by any standard a competent piece of writing. The smooth transition from a general comment in the first paragraph to a localized conversation, the two parentheses (one of which effects the transition and the other takes the edge off the obvious manipulation of Lady Bendham as a foil or 'feed'), Henry's devastating quips, the dialogue high-lighting character (the dean's promptness in exclaiming approbation for the 'benevolence' of the Earl, and the Earl's somewhat hysterical reaction at the mention of accounts and calculation, yet his readiness to approve of them if they can be used to arraign the poor), nobody being completely

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1. NA, I, pp.125-9.

left in the background (for even the dean keeps frowning though his spoken part is meagre), - in all this one can see why the reviews of Mrs. Inchbald's novels were full of admiration for her skilful management of dialogue.[1] A measure of her achievement is evidenced by the little reference outside the passage that is required to comprehend the scene and the context and to 'place' the characters.

That some of Mrs. Inchbald's competence lies in her ability to manipulate things is only too plain. Henry, here as in another passage we have already quoted,[2] is given every opportunity to make his unorthodox points. Lady Bendham is offered as easy game, and the Earl's insistence on eliciting explanations from Henry exposes the author's hand just as clearly. Though both the Bendhams emerge as a bit of a fool in the process, such manipulation, we have argued earlier,[3] is neither illegitimate nor undesirable.

But surely some of the 'charm' of the passage lies in the freshness of approach it contains - an approach that delights in exploding some of the cherished, advanced ideals of the day, ideals like economy and management, the major entries in the radical copy-books. Of the lack of economy in Lord and Lady Bendham who never had the skill and management 'to be exempt from debts',[4] Robert Bage would have been about as critical as (if not more than) Mrs. Inchbald. But he would also have agreed with Lady Bendham's prescription for the poor. Mrs. Inchbald's young Henry instead

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1. See, for example, Analytical Review, X, May 1791, p.102.
2. See above, p. 341.
3. See above, p. 347n.
4. NA, I, p.125.

prepares to get pen and ink and do some calculation to see if the wages of a labouring man with a family were adequate to his needs. Benevolence - of all things - is decried, not as in Pratt and Bage who would like it to be selective and chastened by wise calculation, but as a form of prudence aimed at keeping the rebelliousness of the poor.[1] There is more than a contemporary flavour in Henry's outspokenness on this point as when he goes on to explain his cryptic, sententious quip and says that the Earl gives charity 'lest the poor, driven to despair, should take all'.[2]

But this seems to give away the game. For it turns out that Mrs. Inchbald is after all being no less prudent than Lord Bendham or Robert Bage, whose Hermsprong on one occasion uses his benevolence to quell a rebellious mob of miners, traditionally the worst treated and the most turbulent section of the working population. Young Henry, even though he calls benevolence by its right name, himself advocates some form of prudent safeguard against the possibility of rebellion by the poor. If Lord Bendham, says Henry, 'would only be so good as to speak a few words for the poor as a senator, he might possibly for the future keep his hundred pounds, and yet they never want it'. Legislative reforms providing for a 'moderate subsistence' for the poor would prevent them from taking

1. For Mrs. Inchbald's attitude to charity, see also NA, II, pp.145-6: 'Yet the poor, the widow, and the orphan, frequently shared William's ostentatious bounty', etc. William's is Miss Jellyby's type of philanthropy - 'had he adopted private pity, instead of public munificence', it would have been all right. Yet later, a poor parishioner of the Bishop's complains that the pastor's charity was niggardly in the extreme. (See II, pp.175-8). Also see II, p.195.

2. See also NA, I, pp.101-2 where Henry insinuates, against the dean's contrary point of view, that the poor have a right, as much as the rich, to the products of the earth.

recourse to desperate means, and would, in addition, obviate the need for unwilling doles on the occasion of Christmas.

It may be argued that Mrs. Inchbald is being ironical and/or making a tactical point to induce Lord Bendham to do something in Parliament about the condition of the poor. With his complacent belief that the poor are in no need of help, he is after all not likely to take up their cause, and we do not learn of his doing so. Moreover, Henry may be suggesting a simple sort of prudence (saving a hundred pounds), not from any personal approval of such a narrow attitude, but only as motive acceptable and potent enough for Lord Bendham. He is not so naive as he sounds. But if irony is intended, it has only a local validity. For, in the end, Mrs. Inchbald advises the poor not to grumble against the government to which they should feel grateful, whether or not their interests are properly looked after.

Even apart from any intended or implicit irony, Mrs. Inchbald is no doubt stressing here the duty of the rich senator, pointing out what they can and should do for the poor. This is not identical with prescribing acquiescence to the poor. The tone here is different from that at the end of the novel. Yet the passage anticipates her final emphasis on a kind of paternalism.

Indications of a possible vacillation are spread all over the work, and sometimes coexist with the strongest denunciation of religious and political orthodoxy. When young Henry learns of young William's marriage with Miss Sedgeley, he pleads with his cousin and tries to persuade him to marry Hannah. Lady Clementina, he says, might object to such a union, but the dean certainly could not:

> "Remember the sermon he preached but last Sunday, upon - the shortness of this life: contempt of all riches and worldly honours in balance with a quiet conscience - and the assurance he gave us - that the greatest happiness enjoyed upon earth, was under an humble roof with heaven in prospect."
> "My father is a very good man," said William, "and yet, instead of being satisfied with an humble roof, he looks impatiently forward to a bishop's palace".
> "He is so very good then", said Henry, "that perhaps, seeing the dangers to which men in exalted stations are exposed, he has such extreme philanthropy, and so little self-love, he would rather that himself should brave these perils incidental to wealth, and grandeur, than any other person."
> "You are not yet civilized", said William, "and to argue with you, is but to instruct, without gaining instruction."
> "I know, Sir," replied Henry, "that you are studying the law most assiduously, have vast prospects of rising to eminence in your profession: but let me hint to you - that though you may be perfect in the knowledge how to administer the commandments of men, unless you keep in view the precepts of God, your judgment, like mine, will be fallible".[1]

It is a pungent satire on the hypocrisy of the ministers of established church,[2] but that is as far as the passage goes. When Henry finally speaks of 'the precepts of God', one feels that he was citing the dean's sermon as an infallible guide to conduct, and that when Mrs. Inchbald eventually preaches from the same text and accepts the assurance the dean gave his congregation - 'that the greatest happiness enjoyed upon earth, was under an humble roof with heaven in prospect -', the only modification she seems to have made is that whether or not the rich follow the commandments or precepts of God (they would refuse to do so at their own risk), the poor must.

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1. NA, I, pp.150-2.
2. For other examples, see ibid., I, pp.22-23, where Henry senior is said to possess 'the virtues of humility and charity, far above William, the profest teacher of these virtues'; and I, p.26, where the dean, on hearing of Henry's marriage with a public singer, says, "As to despise, ... heaven forbid that we should despise any one - that would be unlike a Christian - but do you imagine I can ever introduce her to my intended wife, who is a woman of family?"

Sometimes indeed we come across remarks and comments which go far beyond a lukewarm anti-clericalism. In that dialogue, already quoted, between young Henry and his uncle, occasioned by the dismissal of the coachman, Henry's position is diametrically opposed to the dean's, to the orthodox, established Church assumption that class distinctions are ordained by God and therefore immutable. But it goes very much further. As the Deity is responsible for this world as well as the next, Henry's last, unanswered question - 'How! has God ordained a distinction to be made, and will not make it himself?' - is pregnant with atheistic implications.[1] Yet where God and religion are the final court of appeal, where class-distinctions are reprehensible because not sanctioned by the Supreme Being, there is always the danger of a last minute recantation, of some form or another of surrender to the will and word of God as sold by the approved dealer. Mrs. Inchbald, moreover, belonged to the organised Catholic Church. When she comes disconcertingly close to the dean's position, when his argument - 'they will be rewarded in a better world than this' - is accepted as perfect anodyne, one feels that this happens because of her reliance on divine dispensation, on religious assumptions.

We may recall that though he had no proper respect for rank, Henry was nevertheless 'very tractable', and could, 'without severity, be cured of all his faults'.[2] Or, again, though on his

1. 'The paradoxical exclamation, that God has made all things right, and that error has been introduced by the creature, whom He formed, knowing what He formed, is as unphilosophic as impious'. Mary Wollstonecraft, The Rights of Woman, op.cit., p.17.

2. NA, I, p.56.

arrival in England, he was as deficient in religious education as untutored in the ways of civilized society, he not only readily but fervently accepts his first lesson in the nature of divinity and the use and efficacy of prayers. He had frequently in his conversation betrayed the total want of all knowledge in respect to religion or futurity'. The dean therefore undertakes to instruct him. The incorrigible young savage continues to ask inconvenient questions. He is surprised to learn that he could pray to, that is, approach, the Almighty Father at all hours, though he could not be so bold with the Bishop, the dean's friend. When told that as servant of God, the Bishop had to be treated with respect, he asks, "With more respect than his master?" To this the dean has no answer, but Henry goes on to ask other questions. Do the poor and unhappy also offer thanks to God in their prayers? Do his aunt and all her card parties thank Him too? In her scepticism Mrs. Inchbald stops short of taking the final plunge, as some (not many) thinkers of the century, on other counts, did. She tamely allows Henry, despite his unanswered questions, to say his prayer, with unparalleled devotion and submission. The 'self-same ignorance', which had given so much trouble on other occasions, now appears to the dean as 'productive of a most rare and exalted virtue'. He embraced his nephew; let fall a tear to his brother's misfortunes; and admonished the youth to show himself equally submissive to other instructions, as he had done to those, which inculcate piety'.[1]

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1. NA, II, pp.105-113.

Mrs. Inchbald's idea of piety may be different from the dean's, but what happens eventually is only that, as hoped for, Henry is 'cured of all his faults' including his want of proper respect for rank, that he has listened to the dean's admonition and fulfilled his expectation by becoming as submissive to social orthodoxy as he was to religious. One suspects that it is religious instruction that in the long run makes him connive at social distinctions he had been carping at before. Riches and prosperity continue to have their stigma, but, for that very reason, poverty is so upgraded as not only to be bearable but even desirable.

It may also be pointed out that even the nature-art dichotomy, at least in the case of the brothers, has been partly viewed as a contrast between the true religion of Henry and the false religion of the elder brother. Religion, nature and the radical programme, it seems, are all on the same side. But if radicalism tended to acquire from the concept of nature only a romantic-escapist slant, it was considerably more watered down by the obscurantism, mysticism, quietism of religion, of whatever variety. It is through religious instruction that the noble savage here is eventually tamed into the meek who are said to inherit the earth!

Such an approach reminds one of Jonas Hanway who makes a typical and, to us anyway, unambiguous statement about the role of religion in containing the radical spirit and the discontent of the poor. In his Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation of the Labouring part of our fellow-subjects (1767),

he asks,

> If they [the poor] are not properly acquainted with the precepts of their religion, to regulate and control any mistaken notions of liberty which they may entertain, and habituate their minds to obedience, what can be expected but anarchy and confusion?[1]

Again, seven years later, he argues that the poor would only be more serviceable if education of a limited nature is given to them.[2]

Poverty was by no means a pleasant subject to dwell on, and with the increasing segregation of the rich man's quarters from the poor man's slums, it may be right to say that the visiting foreigner was more likely to take notice of the growing poverty in Britain than the local people, and that the philanthropist was more likely to worry over conditions abroad than those at home. Yet the problem could not be altogether ignored. The eighteenth-century mob of the city poor, the primitive rebel, was a portent that required and exacted precaution. Life and property of the industrious and fortunate citizen had to be protected from the disorderly, drunken rabble - foraging individually and in small gangs, or posing a collective threat on critical occasions. In this direction, religious education was to play at least as important a rôle as the enforcement of civil laws. And when the

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1. 1767, I, p.xiv.

2. See Virtue in Humble Life, etc., 1774, I, pp.vii-viii. Hanway esteems 'piety and simplicity, as qualities with which the lowest in condition are rich, and without them the highest poor'. (p.vii) One may also note in this connexion that conversion to Christianity was frequently supposed to make the slaves on the plantations abroad more tractable. To cite an evidence from beyond our period, Uncle Tom never once transgressed against his owner and master, especially since he became a Christian.

anarchic, mistaken notions of liberty and equality, as held by Mrs. Inchbald's young Henry are finally regulated and controlled by religious instruction, one suspects that Hannah More's Repository Tracts exercised some influence even over fictional beings.

(4)

But Mrs. Inchbald is not Hannah More, and though there is much in the novel to anticipate her conclusions, there is about as much to make one feel disappointed with them and reject them. In her criticism of wealth and ambition, she is probably doing no more than subscribing to a traditionalist world outlook. Her approach in this respect is hardly different from, say, that of Thomas à Kempis in The Imitation of Christ. But even in some of the passages we have already quoted, the tone of her criticism of the established church, in the character of the dean, is sharp enough to imply an indictment of the religious ethic as a whole. Some other early passages also indicate a susceptibility which is more anti-religious than anti-clerical. Describing the first year of William and Henry elders in London, she says,

> After a trial of three weeks passed in London, a year followed, during which, William and Henry never sat down to a dinner, or went into a bed, without hearts glowing with thankfulness to that providence which had bestowed on them such unexpected blessings; for no longer did they presume to expect (what still they presumed they deserved) a secure pittance for themselves in this world of plenty. Their experience, since they came to town, had informed them that, to obtain a permanent livelihood, is the good fortune but of a part of those who are in want of it.[1]

1. NA, I, p.5.

Whether Mrs. Inchbald intended it or not, when we come to the 'unexpected blessings' and, still more, when we come to the parenthesis, the foregoing 'hearts glowing with thankfulness to ... providence' acquires an ironic import. The brothers after all did not expect more than what they deserved, and more than what Mrs. Inchbald herself regards as everybody's due.

Soon afterwards we come upon the following:

> Weary of repeating their mean accomplishments of "honesty, sobriety, humility", and on the precipice of reprobating such qualities, - which, however beneficial to the soul, gave no hope of preservation to the body; - they were prevented from this profanation by the fortunate remembrance of one qualification [Henry's fiddling talents].[1]

If the brothers are not allowed to renounce these virtues, it is not because these virtues are dear to Mrs. Inchbald but more because some sober, reasonably remunerative employment has to be found so as to set off the brothers on their respective careers (- and as some kind of a foothold, fiddling does as well as anything else). Moreover, when Henry (out of his natural feeling of affection for William) steals delicacies from the tables of the rich, Mrs. Inchbald does after all realize that the christian virtue of honesty may sometimes run counter to nature. Yet again, Hannah commits all sorts of crimes, she repudiates the mean accomplishments like honesty and sobriety without losing the author's sympathy. An emphatic condemnation of christian morality is contained in the passage itself when Mrs. Inchbald says that her cardinal virtues 'however beneficial to the soul, gave no hope of preservation to the body'.

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1. NA, I, p.7.

The conclusion of the novel is an arbitrary rejection of this anti-religious, radical position. Even till late in the novel we can see a tension between the two poles in Mrs. Inchbald's world outlook. We may recall the passage where after elaborating upon the respective careers of the brothers, she says that 'during those twenty years, where William knew one happy moment, Henry tasted hundreds'. In spite of this, she says in the next sentence, 'That the state of the mind, and not outward circumstances, is the nice point on which happiness depends is but a quaint remark'.[1] The very fact that she goes on to illustrate the quaint observation, to try to prove it valid, perhaps shows a chink in her armour. But after a long peroration, she also partly retracts from what she had taken pains to establish. She says,

> But though, comparatively with his brother, William was the less happy man, yet his self-reproach was not of such magnitude ... as to banish a certain degree of happiness, and a sensibility to the smiles of fortune from his breast - nor was Henry's self-acquittal of such exquisite kind as to chase away the feeling of his desolate situation.[2]

The equation that riches = unhappiness, and poverty = happiness is after all not all that simple. The slight modification is still significant as being more consistent with the general drift of the novel than the conclusion is. The respective careers of the brothers and cousins, and the career of Hannah, all go to show that it is the outward circumstances more than anything else, that determine one's mental make-up.[3]

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1. NA, II, p.116.
2. Ibid., II, p.120.
3. Also see ibid., I, p.66 and II, p.162.

They hardly point to the conclusion that happiness is attainable through reflection.

Nor for that matter do they point to the conclusion that happiness is attainable through industry. Henry senior says towards the end of the novel (and his son agrees with him),

> While I have health and strength...I will not take from any one in affluence, what only belongs to the widow, the fatherless, and the infirm; for to such alone, by christian laws - however custom may subvert them - the overplus of the rich is due.[1]

The Christian laws she thinks of (whether worth anything in practice or not) may be unexceptionable insofar as they enjoin upon the rich to spend their overplus on the cripple, of one kind or another, though this kind of selective charity which nevertheless allows the rich to exploit the industrious poor has its obvious limitations. But the implication that health and strength provide perfect guarantee against starvation is a little difficult to accept - not only on empirical grounds but even on the basis of what has gone before in the novel itself. We may recall that in a passage we have already quoted, the young Henry, before he is tamed, says that 'Health, strength and the will to earn a moderate subsistence ought to be every man's security from obligation'.[2] This is as it ought to be. But plainly it is not so. Yet in the later passage Mrs. Inchbald has evidently forgotten this. At the end of the novel, the Henrys in their abject poverty are in the same position as the brothers were in the beginning, but while previously even

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1. Ibid., II, pp.194-5.
2. See above p. 373.

a moderate subsistence was hard to get, now poverty itself is conducive to happiness. Nothing has happened to nullify the earlier experience in London, reality remains the same. Now as before the poor would be driven out of the country to London, by inexorable and impersonal laws, and, for lack of employment, would be sent to the workhouse, or the gallows, or their original parish, or would be pressed into going abroad. And because nothing has happened to warrant a conclusion like Mrs. Inchbald's, the conclusion is hardly acceptable. She once realized that what was good for the soul was not necessarily good for the body, and that the needs of the body are also important. In the end the needs of the body have undergone an unaccountable undervaluation.

Perhaps by the end the poor are supposed to have known better than to grumble against their poverty. But the education of the Henrys does not proceed from experience, but from a priori religious assumptions. And after all, the rich had suffered before now, and died without hope of salvation, but that did not make the lot of the poor better. Mrs. Inchbald certainly uses it as a means of imparting to the poor lessons in the 'religious' virtues of humility and subservience. But the moral tag of a reactionary ideology does not destroy the impression created by the rest of the novel. Because it is unrelated to and does not follow from what has gone before, one does not find it quite convincing and can dispense with it, to draw one's own moral.

Even towards the end in fact, the awareness of a serious flaw in the organization of society is still there. In a passage we have quoted before, we still find a serious indictment of the system in which some people have to go without jobs, while others

are handicapped because they have no need to work.[1] Or, again, only a few pages earlier, there is Henry senior's dialogue with the poor peasant he meets after the funeral of the Bishop, his brother. We find here nothing of the quaint philosophy that the poor are better off than the rich. The poor farmer is the chief interlocutor and acts as a choric, impersonal voice. He bitterly inveighs against the Bishop's general want of charity, the poor quality of the alms he gave, and of how, while he took proper care of his pets, he thought of the workhouse as the best place for the poor.[2] The farmer is even more of a primitive being than the Catholic Mrs. Inchbald and he criticises the idea of selective charity which his author upholds at another place.

Nature and Art has been written from the point of view of the poor, and the weak conclusion cannot entirely negate this fact. The theology of Henry Clinton, Golding and Meekly in The Fool of Quality smacks of the fashionable world. Mrs. Inchbald's religion derives from and aligns itself with the cottage. Hers is not the point of view of the merchant prince, nor of the up and coming middle class businessman and careerist, but of the poor who flocked to the cities and did not always find employment, much less advancement in life.

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1. See above p. 368.
2. See NA, II, pp.175-80.

V

CONCLUSION

The central interest of Mrs. Inchbald's novel, the growing prosperity of some and the poverty of others, anticipates a major preoccupation of Victorian novelists. There is a lot in common between Nature and Art and Hard Times. The contrast between the world of Bounderby and that of the unkempt, uncivilized but humane horse-riders shows the use of a similar frame of reference as Mrs. Inchbald's. (The two Williams are not businessmen, but after business the church and the bar were the two professions through which promotion in the social scale came most easily.) Some other points of similarity may be noted. William senior's attitude to his brother and his mean vocation of fiddling, or William junior's attitude to his old friendship (with Henry) and love (for Hannah) is similar to Bounderby's attitude to his mother. Then, the way young William defines, for young Henry's benefit, the difference between massacre and war, reminds one of Bitzer's classic definition of the horse. Young Henry's persistent confusion with other pairs of words shows a similar inability to Sissy Jupe's to distinguish between, say, National and Natural Economy or between statistics and stutterings. To go on, when young Henry points out that the fine, scholastic distinction between massacre and war has no value for the person who is killed in either, he brings to mind Sissy's rejection of the law of averages on the ground that it means no alleviation of the individual's suffering.

Mrs. Inchbald's approach is by and large anti-utilitarian.

She makes the kind of distinction between persons and things that Coleridge made when he said that persons are not things that they would, as claimed by political economists, find their level. There is in the two Williams a sleek quality, a certain singleness of purpose, a quality of application, of perseverance, which would have made them successful in whatever profession they entered and which the 'utilitarian' would have approved of.

This anti-utilitarianism of Mrs. Inchbald, this disregard of impersonal laws and a sincere (to the extent it goes) concern for human suffering, proceeds I suspect even from her religious catholic approach and upbringing. Grounded in an ethic which has its points of difference with that vigorous individualism which on the plane of the society and the individual dreamt of perfectibility, she could not, like the Puritans, imagine the possibility of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth (Godwin's utopia may legitimately be viewed as a latter day secular analogue of it). Nor could she approve of the idea of self-cultivation and self-improvement which in practice meant careerism, the acquisition of merit, that is, money, the ability to outstrip others in the race of life, no matter whether by foul or fair means. She is on the whole outside the Calvinist/Capitalist tradition. And in a sense it is her retrogressive approach to life which makes her critical of the kind of new society that other radicals of the period, more progressive than she in certain respects, were working for or upholding the ideology of.

This is not to say that other radicals were in toto the precursors of the hard-bound, aggressive Manchesterism of a later

day. Free-traders themselves were in fact, as the General Eyre case was to show, more liberal in some cases than the anti-utilitarians. In any case, as we have seen with Bage, even the most representative middle class radical may have his reservations about the ideology of his class. Nature and Art may be by and large an expression of the middle class conscience towards the poor, but Mrs. Inchbald's sympathy for the poor, and her anti-utilitarian critique, seems to me to be partly the outcome of an attitude rooted in the past.

It is of course not all that simple. James Boaden in his memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald points out that she had frequent doubts about her religion. For long periods, she used to give up the usual observances expected of her as a catholic. She also came in contact with the writings of the radical philosophers of the period. Both Godwin and Holcroft were her friends, though the latter did not like Nature and Art. On their request she withheld publication of her play, The Massacre, a sentimental comment on the 'excesses' of the French Revolution. When Holcroft was in jail, Mrs. Inchbald, though by then an estrangement had taken place between them, visited him there, despite the risk of persecution. Some casual, topical allusions in her novel, though few, indicate a measure of emotional involvement and a familiarity with the current political scene. In one of his verbal encounters with the usual select gathering at the dean's, young Henry is obliged to remain silent when the Bishop advances a not so weighty argument. Not that Henry had no reply, but what 'he wished to say must ever

remain a secret!.- The church has its terrors, as well as the law, and Henry was awed by the dean's tremendous wig, as much as Paternoster Row is awed by the attorney-general'.[1] Soon after this Henry makes one of his usual mistakes in the use of words. He cannot quite understand the difference between prosecute and persecute. To prosecute (for printed libel), he thinks, is the same as to persecute, particularly if the libelled person deserved to be written against. An author who had published an article on Lady Clementina (Norwynne) and on how she cheated at her card parties advances, to avoid being sued, the false plea that he meant by the initials Lady Catharine Newland who never played. He goes on to say that 'no people are more in fear of prosecutions than authors and editors'.[2] In all this one feels Mrs. Inchbald is thinking of the prosecutions that took place (or did not) during the period. We may recall in this connexion that the preface Godwin wrote for the first edition of Caleb Williams had to be suppressed, that the publisher of Tom Paine's Age of Reason was tried and convicted, that in Bryan Perdue Holcroft frequently says, or makes as if to say, something that may be construed as an attack on authority and follows it up with a mock apology.

Mrs. Inchbald thus had points of contact with the radical set of the period. Her values are not always and not entirely religious. She had an astute business sense, and there was something vivacious in her character (Miss Milner is said to be modelled after her author), which refused to be trammelled by a religious ethic.

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1. NA, I, p.84.
2. Ibid., I,pp.97-8.

All this breeds and manifests a tension in her between the religious and the secular, the reactionary and the radical. In A Simple Story, this tension appears in her sympathetic treatment of Miss Milner and her not very ambiguous disapproval of the rigid morality of the catholic priest. In Nature and Art, it appears as a polarity, as an uncomfortable co-existence of an extreme radical position with a reactionary world-view.

Nature and Art was first conceived in 1791 and published in 1796. It subsumes perhaps the change in British public opinion that occurred over those five years with regard to the French Revolution or to political radicalism in general. The Massacre, (printed in 1792 but not published), however, shows that she was never steady in her political opinions. In this respect she was somewhat like Mrs. Charlotte Smith and Mary Hays, two of her contemporaries who kept fluctuating between militant enthusiasm and militant reaction. Perhaps Mrs. Inchbald, in her final vacillation in Nature and Art, is no more and no less blameable than numerous of her contemporaries and compatriots. And after all the rich-poor distinction in society did not permit at this stage of any solution except in a novelistic, idealistic conclusion.

CONCLUSION

In July 1791, a reviewer in the Monthly issued, pro bono publico, a 'Recipe for Dressing up Novels ad libitum'. He observed that 'When a manufacture has been carried on long enough for the workmen to attain a general proficiency, the uniformity of the stuffs will render it difficult to decide on the preference of one piece beyond another'. This he offered as his apology for 'not entering into the merits of the novel now before us',[1] which had 'nothing to attract particular attention, either as to materials or workmanship'. 'Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, were the Wedgwoods of their days'. But numerous imitators have since 'started up in the same line'. 'When an art becomes general, then is the time for the invention of engines to facilitate the operations, as in the cotton manufacture'. Swift's 'machine for the composition of books' did not seem to have answered the purpose. Therefore the reviewer was publishing 'a scheme for the easy multiplication of novels, cheap in its execution, and certain in its operation'. Follows the recipe:

> Go to Middle Row, Holborn; where...the sellers of old cast-off wigs have given place to the dealers in cast-off books; there, on the bulks, from among the classes of a groat or sixpence per volume, buy any old forgotten novel, the older the better; give new names to the personages and places, reform the dates, modernize such circumstances as may happen to be antiquated, and, if necessary, touch up the style a little with a few of those polite cant words and phrases that may be in fashion at the time. All this may be done with a pen, in the margin of the printed book, without the trouble of transcribing the whole, unless it is to be carried to a bookseller for sale; for then you must show a manuscript....

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1. The Labyrinths of Life, by the author of Excessive Sensibility and Fatal Follies.

> To a publisher, there are many advantages attending this mode of proceeding; and the saving of copy-money is to be reckoned as the chief. A novel of two or three volumes, that could not be purchased under four or five guineas, may be thus new vamped from an old one, by a compositor who dabbles a little with his pen, for perhaps half a guinea; and if the alterations be skilfully performed they will confound the judgment, so that, neither author nor bookseller knowing his own book again, a prosecution for copy-right need not be apprehended. The most that even a reader with a good memory could say, would be, that there is nothing new in it ...

From the continuous spate of unoriginal novels, the reviewer suspected that his scheme 'has been anticipated, and is already in practice'.[1]

The novelists we have discussed above are in no way absolute exceptions to the phenomenon that the reviewer in the Monthly was remarking upon. Both in respect of the notions they upheld or advanced and the technical conventions they adopted or followed, they have a lot in common among themselves and bear a close imprint of 'the Wedgwoods of fiction'. In order to survive they had to dabble in all sorts of literary exercises. But their unoriginality was not entirely a matter of following in the footsteps of success and making capital of it, or of closely following the trends in the book-market. Their interest in the life of their period was frequently serious and they found much in the serious intentions and interests of their great predecessors that conformed to their own cherished ideals. These ideals, however, as we have seen particularly with regard to Holcroft's version of the Tom Jones theme, underwent significant modifications at the hand of our novelists - modifications that indicate how the values

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1. Monthly Review (2nd Series), V, 1791, pp.337-8.

of an earlier epoch were in the process of a subtle (and not too violent) transmutation. Our novelists do indeed trace a fairly accurate graph of the changing temper of the age from about the late 'sixties of the century to the last decade.

Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality, we have seen, represents some clash of interest between the landed aristocracy and the big merchant. The social contradiction depicted here gives the author an excuse for ignoring the tensions of a new era, which nevertheless keep coming up. In other words, the more imminent, the more urgent duality of the second half of the eighteenth century imposes itself on a fable which has virtually, though not completely, lost its topicality, but which has acquired a fresh relevance from recreating, in a new context, some of the stresses of an earlier period of drastic and rapid change. In the seventeen-sixties, when The Fool of Quality came out, the movement towards industrial capitalism, free trade and free enterprise had hardly yet made any perceptible headway. Removed in time from both the seventeenth-century Civil Wars and the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution, and living in Hibernian isolation, Brooke certainly was not the man to absorb and communicate the urgency and vigour associated with periods of tumult and turmoil. He had dabbled for a time with the factional politics of the reign of George II, was a Whig on the side of the 'Patriots', had met Pope and the Prince of Wales: he had, in short, his roots in 'Augustan peace'. There is no Satan or Diabolus in The Fool of Quality, no villain; and none that is capable of reformation. Through Wesley who dismissed Rousseau as a coxcomb and spoke well of the work of Hannah More and Wilberforce,

Brooke is a pointer to the role of the evangelical revival during and after the French Revolutionary period.

Robert Bage has his failings too. From his business in Tamworth, he keeps himself informed of all that is happening, but seldom makes any incursions into the outside world. His direct participation in politics seems to be limited to his having helped William Hutton who was obliged to leave Birmingham after the notorious riots of 1791.[1] He had also a stake in the country, and his radical opinions, as also his attitude to the poor, very often seem to have their origin in selfish motives with his business interests in mind. But with him we are less equivocally than with Henry Brooke in the thick of a new era. He makes us aware of a different kind of social conflict: he is the spokesman, to a large extent, of the industrial capitalist as against the landed and mercantile aristocracy. Yet absolute contrasts are not his forte. Nature and art so defined as counterposed categories, as completely antithetical concepts, never occur in his corpus, not even in Hermsprong. At times it seems that his criticism of certain types of middle class character is meant as no more than to define, like Miss Edgeworth in her moral tales, the norm. But his romantic critique goes beyond his immediate class interests. If Nature for him was the school for ideal businessman, it was also a sanctuary from the life of hectic business. Art was for him the artificial life of the aristocracy, but also the cramping atmosphere of an accounting house.

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1. See William Hutton on Robert Bage in a letter to the editor of Monthly Magazine, vol. XII, Part II, 1801, p.479.

By the end of the century, in Godwin, Holcroft, and less equivocally in Mrs. Inchbald, Mary Wollstonecraft and John Thelwall a concern for the material conditions of the poor can be seen to be emerging, and simultaneously with it a more hard-hitting radical approach than in the works of Brooke and Bage. The idealistic tags begin to be abandoned and we get some inkling of the kind of realism that we generally associate with the Victorians. Yet, as we have seen, these novelists are held back by a traditionalist approach sometimes and by their attachment to middle class values and idealistic panaceas.

These authors belonged to the underworld of literature. Mrs. Oliphant discusses some of them, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Holcroft, Mrs. Inchbald, as belonging to the cockney school. But she also speaks of

> the quiet commonplace bourgeois existence which they carried on obscurely in out-of-the-way streets in all the usual subjection to law and social order notwithstanding that the principles they maintained were wild enough, as they thought themselves, and as many people thought, to upset all the foundations of society.... Some of them were tried for high treason, no less, in those hot and exciting French Revolution days. They were considered dangerous to their country and to religion, and to everything that the ordinary mass holds sacred; yet, nevertheless, lived very quiet, humdrum, citizen lives'.[1]

Mrs. Oliphant's use of the word 'bourgeois' is suspect: yet there is no denying the fact, in whatever sense we use the word. By and large these novelists belonged to the lowest rungs of society, not much above the surface of that underworld which consists of the dregs, the slum-dwellers, criminals, alcoholics, social misfits

1. Mrs. O.M. Oliphant, The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and beginning of the Nineteenth Century, 1882, II, p.207.

and failures of all variety. Yet their values and aspirations were those of the middle class. It is not only that on the plane of the individual they wanted to do well in life through self-improvement, but that on most points they shared and subscribed to the ideals and political ambitions of the industrial capitalist. It is true no doubt that the ideals that were then formulated and upheld are the ideals we have yet to achieve. It is true also that much in these ideals is still of value to us today. But over the years we have also come to see the limitations of Victorian liberalism and the eighteenth-century radical tradition. We vaguely feel for those who fervently believed in amelioration and perhaps would have been disappointed with the reality that their ideals ushered in. But their utopia is not ours, if at all there is still a utopia somewhere that we can believe in and fight for.

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The authors are arranged in an alphabetical order, while their works are in general listed chronologically. Where there is a difference in the date of the first publication and that of the publication of the edition (or reprint) I have used, the former is put within brackets immediately after the title. The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.

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